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PUNCH

Vol. CCXXXV No. 6154 JULY 30 1958

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TALK of the increasing danger of a nation-wide dock strike has been received with secret satisfaction by the Government. Who said they wouldn't be able to think of a valid, face-saving excuse for pulling British troops out of the Middle East?

CHARIVARIA

are beginning to retreat a little. But they say they won't really abandon their position until a palace revolution is staged in London by British officers trained at the Royal Military College, Cairo.

HEAVY GUNFIRE was heard for one hour last week on the Russian island of Kunashiri, and a Tokyo dispatch spoke of gun flashes and searchlight beams and "some seventy artillery blasts lasting more than an hour." This all has a nice old-fashioned air compared with the silent trembling of seismographs and the distant mushroom in the sky.

IT is rumoured that a firm of public opinion pollsters, taking soundings on Mr. Macmillan's wisdom, Mr. Khrushchev's sincerity, Mr. Hammarskjöld's



THE grand scale of China's political organization is illustrated by Peking reports that a million and a half demonstrators marched past the British Embassy shouting hostile slogans. The best we could do over here was four hundred people besieging the Adelphi Theatre trying to get their money back.

FLEET STREET men have been murmuring their sympathy with the *News Chronicle* reporter who described his arrival in Baghdad in an eleven-word



flash, while the *Daily Express* man got in a three-column piece and a map telling how he got half-way and was turned back.

EVEN the stoutest defenders of Britain's right to guide the Arab nations

impartiality, Mr. Dulles's foreign policy, King Hussein's reliability, President Nasser's complicity and similar topical matters made history by getting their first "Don't Know—100%."

N.A.A.F.I. managers throughout the world welcome the publicity given to the Institute's impressive deficit of £375,447. Perhaps at last the customers will stop asking what happens to the profits.

BACKWARD-FACING aircraft seats are again up for review. Advocates of the system will point out its immense value in putting international delegations into the right pre-Summit state of mind.

"Touring Opera 1958"
 THE SINGERS will be still the same,
 Their art not less complete:
 Carl Rosa by any other name
 Will sound as sweet.



Punch Diary

MR. KHRUSHCHEV's unexpectedly eager acceptance of Mr. Macmillan's suggestion that he should attend a quasi-summit meeting of the United Nations in New York has slightly embarrassed the Americans, who, I suppose, never imagined that he would do any such thing. So far they have countered by saying that it is unlikely that the President will take much actual part in the discussion, apart from just being there to add tone to it, and that the presence of so many heads of state in New York will be the biggest security headache of all time. If this doesn't discourage the intrepid Russian Premier, they may next be expected to bring out that one about the Tu104 being too noisy to land at Idlewild.

Nothing to Say

WHEN Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, fresh from the Dulles-Hammarskjöld country, gave the usual airport TV interview, he equivocated with skill, and by the time his face faded out in six million homes he still hadn't said anything. No doubt he was congratulated by Cabinet colleagues, who only hoped they would do as well when their turn came. However, a handful of captious viewers are beginning to ask whether there is any point in the airport TV interview. The chance of getting anything out of it varies in inverse ratio with the gravity of the crisis, and though a Minister who has merely been negotiating on banana imports may disclose that his Government plans to buy more bananas, one fresh from decisions on the future of the human race can hardly commit himself beyond the "close

identity of views" routine. Perhaps it is up to the Ministers themselves to decline to appear on these occasions—or to limit their appearances to truly historic moments when, for instance, they can jubilantly wave a piece of paper at the cameras and announce hoarsely: "This means peace in our time."

In Another Place

THE first list of life-peers reveals a curiously half-hearted attitude towards the scheme on the part of the Labour Party, for whose benefit it was supposed to have been dreamed up. The idea, as I saw it, was to strengthen the Opposition in the Lords without actually involving any convinced Socialists in the disgrace of hereditary nobility; but it seems that some Socialists have so much objection to any second chamber at all, except possibly the T.U.C., that out of the first twenty creations it has only been possible to find six who may be said to represent a reinforcement of the Opposition in the Lords. Or seven, if you count Sir Robert Boothby.

Stand Easy

WHILE Red Devils went in, U.S. marines stood to their arms, venom-laden notes sizzled through the air, Nasser intrigued, Khrushchev warned and Dulles lingered shivering

on the brink, none could look more gracefully relaxed and at ease than Mr. Macmillan in the gardens of his Sussex home among the crowds who came for a "charity open day." The leisured country-house air sits so well on him; he would have found it necessary to invent the phrase "We must cultivate our garden" if it had not existed in Voltaire. A garden background is unusual among crisis-ridden Premiers. When city-bred Chamberlain spoke of plucking this flower, safety, out of this nettle, danger, it smacked more of a quick glance through the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations than of a countryman's ready-to-hand metaphor; and Asquith, every inch a classicist, would have scorned an Arcadian simile unless it came from the Georgics or the Eclogues. If Mr. Macmillan ever goes into the wilderness it will be in the footsteps of Cincinnatus, but to grow more roses than cabbages.

Absenteeism de Luxe

THE Committee on leave of absence for peers recommends that peers on leave should retain the right to use the library, the dining-room, guest-room, etc., and receive copies of *Hansard* and Parliamentary Papers if they want them. Their wives and sons should enjoy the same facilities as at present—in other words, no duties but all the privileges. Peers do not pay any subscription for the club amenities, including whatever is covered by "etc." I am quite willing that legislators who spend long hours governing me should be provided with comforts and an occasional luxury; but why on earth should those who don't govern live like lords, or even members of the Athenaeum, at my expense? I seem to be providing a good deal of involuntary hospitality. The other day I even gave tea and ham sandwiches to some men who shouted from the Public Gallery of the House of Commons about their caravan site, though they, at least, were joining in the proceedings.

They're Wonderful

I HEAR from a correspondent that she was motoring in one of the more dangerous parts of Berkshire when her car was stopped by police. One of them addressed her through the window: "Excuse me, madam, but a gentleman has escaped from Broadmoor . . ."





SUMMIT

WESTERN APPROACHES : Painting

A DYING ART?

By JOHN BERGER

"AFTER all, she's no oil painting." The phrase has an old-fashioned ring. It belongs to a time when portraits still hung in private houses rather than museums, and oil paintings were part of the "good life" enjoyed by those whom it had pleased God to call to that particular station. That time has now passed. To-day paintings belong to the studio—a room apart, with an atmosphere more like that of a laboratory than a living room. Artists' lives are still news. But these lives attract far more interest than their works. Does this mean that painting is a dying art?



Intelligent people maintain that it does. Certainly the artist has been pushed out on to the perimeter of life, and whereas once the Emperor Charles V would stoop to pick up the brushes that Titian had dropped, now it is film stars who command Command Performances. Certainly, too, many of the functions which painting once fulfilled—the telling of stories, the propagating of ideas, the recording of historic events—have now been taken over by other media. It is no coincidence that the majority of the great figures of the Renaissance were painters; painting was then the main communicative art. In the nineteenth century the novel, the theatre, and journalism became the principal means of communication. And now in this century the film and television have challenged painting directly—in its own visual field. Is there anything of importance left for painting to do?

The answer, which by implication many contemporary painters appear to give is: Yes, painting can decorate. Subject matter has become less and less important. Most painting to-day is abstract. And whatever the intentions of the artist, this means that most painting to-day has only a decorative function. The painter invents and arranges shapes and colours to please the eye.

Yet if the future of painting depends on this justification, it has, I believe, no future, for by the very logic of the

*Aspects of modern thought
and behaviour*

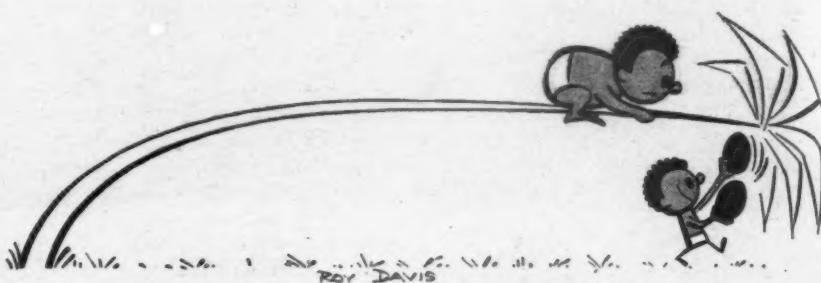
argument the painter will become either a designer or a type of interior decorator. He will be absorbed either into industry or into architecture. Personally, I do not think that this would be so regrettable. Many painters would be using their talents in either of these two spheres far more usefully than they do to-day. Yet at the same time I believe that painting has a future—for quite different reasons.

* * * * *

One must first, I think, distinguish between painting as an art-form in general, and the particular media which painting can use. The oil painting is only five hundred years old. Painting has existed for 20,000 years.

This is not the place to give a potted history of even these last five centuries. It is enough to say that the oil painting, the "easel picture," came about in order to meet the special needs of the new merchant class, the new bourgeoisie. Since then the habits and the needs of this class have shifted considerably. For instance, the domestic "parlour" spirit that it once demanded from painting it now demands—with a very different emphasis—from television. Thus it is possible that the oil painting as we understand it, the small transportable framed picture for hanging on the wall of a private room, is on its way out.

Yet the easel picture, as I have said, does not represent the whole of painting. And if most painters to-day work with



oil on canvas, this is largely because we don't give them the opportunity to work on a public scale in different media. The creative unit in our society becomes increasingly larger. The factory has taken the place of the craftsman's workshop. The combined company and the nationalized industry have taken over from the individual adventurer. Our techniques and our methods of production are leading us inevitably to a more collective form of society. By the same token the individual patron of the arts has become an exception; the new patrons are bound to be public bodies.

So far, however, most public bodies have not woken up to how they can use artists. Artists are of course used for the trivial purpose of advertising; spasmodically they are also employed to make a more serious contribution—in schools, hospitals, factories, trade-union buildings, offices; but on the whole a painter is still thought of—and still thinks of himself—as a man who produces easel pictures for sale to private individuals.

Thus what painting faces to-day is really a time-lag. The typical form of painting, the easel picture, belongs to a social context that has passed—or is passing. Other centuries carved gilded frames: we erect hoardings. Yet no one would dare to suggest that the poster is a new major art-form. A new form has not yet been created. What is needed to create it is a new system of patronage. If our society is not capable of producing this then it is a doomed and sterile society. And I do not arrogantly say this because I think painting is so important but because here painting joins with the other arts in offering us the same kind of challenge. Poetry, the theatre, architecture, sculpture and even the film all await the new demands of an emerging society. If we do not make these demands, and if they are not serious ones, then history would suggest that it is not these arts but we who are dying.

* * * * *

Yet if painting is no longer the principal communicative art, what function will it have? How can it stand up to the competition of photography, the film, the written word, television? As is the case with all media, the unique qualities of painting arise out of its limitations: the painter's images are two-dimensional and static, flat and unchanging.



"He's found out he can keep an eye on the factory."

The screen and the photograph are also flat, but in a different way. With the camera, the reduction of solid objects to flat images is an automatic process. For the painter this "reduction" or "translation" is the very heart of his conscious problem. The camera's job is to intercept reality; the artist's job is to interpret it.

When you look at a good photograph or a good sequence in a film your imagination connects directly with the incident it records. When you look at a good painting you never forget that it is a painting; the fact that it has been made, piece by piece, by another man putting flat marks of colour on a flat surface will always come between you and the incident it depicts. By way of this consciousness of the painting as a

painting the artist can make the spectator marvel: not—if it is a good picture—at his own skill but at what it reveals about its subject. Yet—and this is the point—the painting can only make these revelations because it has been constructed in a different way, according to a different logic, and with different elements from its subject. The truth about a complicated structure can only be revealed by a diagram. And although many paintings are not in the ordinary sense of the word diagrammatic, they work in an equivalent way. Cézanne can make us realize on a flat canvas how air surrounds all four sides of a mountain far more tangibly and vividly than we would ever realize it in front of a real mountain: just as Rubens can make us realize the energy of the human body,

or Goya or Picasso the shape of men's sufferings.

Because the painter uses two-dimensional images which can *only* be looked at, he teaches us to look as nobody else can. It is true that the camera also produces two-dimensional images, but because these are taken automatically from reality their value for us lies in their authenticity, not in their exploration of the very faculty of sight and visual understanding.

The fact that paintings are static also gives them an advantage. The novel, the film, the television programme, the play, all unfold in time; they lead up to a climax and resolve it. We watch or read, and then take our conclusions away with us. The painting does not unfold. It is there in its entirety all the time. The longer we look at it the more deeply we may understand it, but we can see it as a whole instantaneously. A painting does not lead up and away from a climax. It is in itself a climax. We do not take conclusions away with us from a painting: we take images which, unchanging and fixed to one moment, nevertheless appear to have some significance for all moments.

Of all the arts painting is thus the most practical to live with. You sit down to read or to watch a screen, and have to allow yourself so much time. A painting you can glance at as you work, glimpse through your girl's hair as you kiss her, notice as you walk past. It is the most condensed of the arts. And it condenses not into an abstract theorem but into the image of some concrete solid form. Hands, eyes, breasts, trees, rocks, flowers, hardware—these are the tangible familiar elements which

painting uses to make its comments upon life. It is in other words the art which belongs most directly to our daily physical environment and which, sensuously, makes us most aware of that environment. A world without painting would be a bat's world: a world without shape.

* * * * *

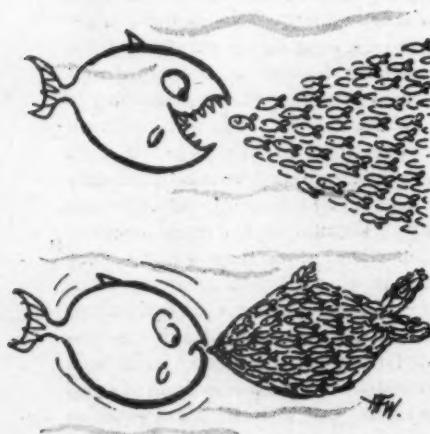
I have tried to show the special qualities of the language of painting: qualities which distinguish it from all other media and make it indispensable. But what can this language be used for? This is a far more difficult and perhaps impossible question to answer; it means prophesying in detail about the character of our future culture. What one can say is that the uses to which painting is put to-day reflect the time-lag crisis which the artist is now facing.

The average contemporary artist is unemployed—as an artist. Consequently he sees his art not as a social activity, not as a means of communication, but as a purely personal pursuit which he has to defend against society. From this attitude springs the obscurity, desperation, egocentricity and meaninglessness of much contemporary painting. It is as if in fact to-day many artists wanted to destroy art because the frustrations which accompany the practice of it are far too great. What is surprising is that they try to destroy it by painting pictures! Even they, in what they believe to be their desperate situation, still put pigment to canvas.

And perhaps this suggests the simplest but most profound reason why painting will continue: there are always men who must paint. Nearly all children draw spontaneously, and although a lot of nonsense has been written about the affinities between child art and adult art, it seems that the desire to paint, the

desire to "possess" things by making images of them, is universal and constant. In most people this desire is not strong enough to withstand the competition of other desires. For a few people it becomes the predominant aim of their lives. These few are artists.

Clearly, then, the painting of the future will not be like the painting of to-day. It will be calmer, more lucid, more modern—because more integrated with the modern world—and more optimistic. It will not—primarily—tell stories as Renaissance painting did. That is now for the screen. It will not on the whole, I think, be an art for private rooms; the decoration of a room will increasingly become the concern of the architect, whilst "animation" will come through television. It will, I believe, be a large-scale public art, and it will belong to the cities. It will in fact resemble in scale our posters and hoardings, but instead of being totally unplanned and trivial or degrading in content it will represent the welcome of the city to its own citizens. The exact forms, themes, or symbols that this art will create we cannot know. (The only clue we have is in the work of the painter who for this very reason is the greatest modern artist—Fernand Léger.) But we can guess its general theme—in the sense that the general theme of European mediæval art was Christianity. Its general theme will be Man in relation to science, to the machine, to his tools. I say this because monumental public art is always about the destiny of man. Through science we now have the ability to control our own destiny. Either we commit suicide (and genocide) through superstition, or we build what people have always dreamt of as Arcadia. I can then visualize an Arcadian art which is without nostalgia and which is realistic.



Next week's article in this series will be by HUGH MASSINGHAM.

Other contributors will be:

MONICA FURLONG
ANTONY HOPKINS
D. F. KARAKA
WOLF MANKOWITZ
Prof. P. M. S. BLACKETT

DREW MIDDLETON
MAURICE RICHARDSON
GEORGE SCOTT
JOHN WAIN
R. C. ROBERTSON-GLASGOW



"You rang?"

To the Chairman of the Smithfield Meat Inquiry

SIR,—I am sorry I was unable to attend on the second day of your inquiry to give evidence re a forequarter that came in half (making two fore-eighths as we say) due to the delivery man absent-mindedly handing one end of it to a humper and the other end to a bummaree while his attention was distracted by an altercation between the scalesman and the cutter over some kidneys believed to have been improperly handled by one of the night men, but the fact is I came over very queer just after reading the first day's evidence in a piece of newspaper my tearer-upper happened to be handing to my wrapperee for a couple of chops I'd just sold to a member, if you'll forgive the expression, of the general public, and the long and short of it was I was taken off to hospital for checking.

Well, sir, it's no business of mine

but if you could have seen the way I was handled you would know where to hold your next inquiry. No courtesy, mind, but the lack of organization! Everybody doing half a dozen jobs, and no proper scheme of distribution. Right at the start, when they were getting me out of the ambulance on a stretcher, I saw how it was going to be. "Whoa up there!" I said to the pullers-back. "Not beyond the tail-board, now."

I might as well have been talking to a haunch of mutton. Do you know, sir, the same pair of pullers-back (and one of them was the driver, if you ask me) not only pitched me right to the hospital door, they humped me clean through into Reception, and not a word said by anyone or a blow struck in anger. I didn't know where to look, I felt so ashamed to see two pairs of hands doing the work of six.

It's the same all along in these places. Take the night women, for a start. I stood it as long as I could, being a stranger in the place if you follow my meaning, but when I saw the same girl bring my breakfast down the ward I made up my mind to speak out.

"What's wrong, then?" I asked her. "Where's the traymen this morning?"

"Traymen?" she said.

"The food humpers," I said. "Breakfastees. Kedgeree. I don't know what you call 'em here. The point is, what are you thinking of, handling food?"

She said the night nurses always brought the breakfast round.

Of course I did my best to explain it to her. "Where's your pride in your job?" I said. "Bringing round hot-water bottles, tucking in sheets, handing out aspirins, humping porridge—this that and the other all night long, it's a

proper muddle. *And* it was you took my temperature round about the time the market opens, unless I'm much mistaken."

She said it was.

"That's skilled work, that is," I told her. "You stick to that and let others do the casual jobs. Licensed men and such. You'll never get the rate for the job if you don't specialize. Look at your own surgeons," I said. "You won't catch a lung man working on a knee joint, now will you?"

She said to lie quiet and not worry. Well!

They had my appendix out in the finish, and a nasty shock I had on the way to the cutter, let me tell you. It was while I was talking to the wheeler-in, just to make conversation as you might say, and I happened to ask what she reckoned to pull in in a good week. Well, she hummed and hawed and came over a bit mind-your-own-business, but in the end she let drop that she was on some kind of weekly wage.

"My God!" I said. "Where's the incentive? Don't you realize that licensed bummarees get one-and-three a hindquarter? Four times that is five bob per patient, less perhaps ten per cent for live meat being easier to handle, and there you are with four-and-six a

time for wheeling in, plus a bit under that for wheeling out according to what the cutter has been up to. *And* as many as you like on one trolley," I said, "with no reduction for quantity. If they want good keen work, they've got to pay for it," I told her.

"Look," I said. "If you don't want to tell me what you get p.w., all right. Say £20. Say £30. My point is you get the same however many you wheel along. So you take your time, see? Well, look at us now, just ambling down the corridor. Put you on piece-work, and you'd soon see the difference. You'd have twice as many through the theatre and done with in the time," I said.

"Don't tell me you've not got twice as many to put through," I interrupted her, when she started to argue. "I know all about your waiting lists. A fine scandal there'd be if we had a tenth as much held up in store as what you've got in your line of business. It's organization and efficiency and every man to his job *and* a proper rate for it that's wanted here," I told her.

Well, then she got properly angry, sir, and came out with a lot of hot air I took no notice of, only in the middle of it she let slip her salary, and a real jolt it gave me.

"Hey!" I said. "Hold on," and I

did a bit of calculating. "You mean to say you get less for humping me into this theatre—*me*," I said, "with four branches in south-east London—than if I'd been an aitchbone," I said, "or a forequarter of lamb?"

She hadn't looked at it like that, she said, and pretty soon after that they gave me a jab in the arm and I lost the thread of the argument. But I dare say I've told enough of what goes on here to let you and your colleagues understand you are wasting your time over this little business of bummarees being otherwise engaged, and the sooner you get round to these hospital places the better.

It's no business of mine, as I say, but if you ask me I'd sum up what's wrong under five main heads:

Slow throughput

Low rates of pay

Lack of specialization among nurses

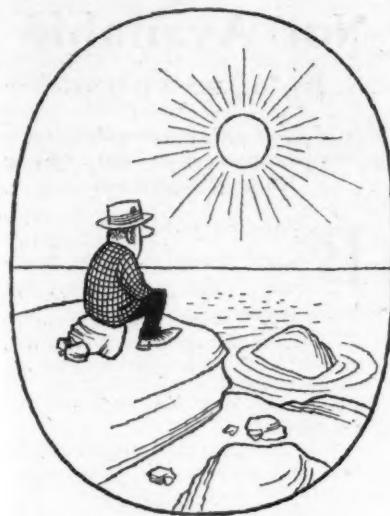
Unrestricted practices

and, worst of all of course, old-fashioned methods of handling. Why, do you know, sir, that when I was ready for collection, instead of having a delivery man hand me over to a licensed porter in the proper way, they let my wife put my hat on and hump me home in our bubble-car? Look at the waste of money somebody might have earned!

H. F. ELLIS



"The oil pollution here must be simply dreadful."



The Middle East: Can I Help You?

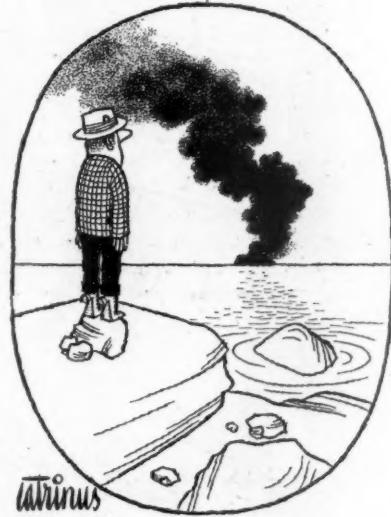
By J. B. BOOTHROYD

WHEN Mr. Cabot Lodge told the Security Council that the dead body of the former Irak delegate, Fadil al Jamali, had been dragged through the streets of Baghdad he made a false assessment of the situation; this was proved soon afterwards when Jamali gave a press conference at his internment camp, in good health. Mr. Lodge did not, however, throw up his hands and say the hell with it, and we mustn't, either. It is true that there are doubts whether Prince Zeid is the same man as al-Amir Zeid ibn al-Hussein, or which of them is King Feisal's great-uncle, if not both; granted there is confusion in some minds between Colonel Abdel Salam Aref and Colonel Abdul Kadir Faik; no one will deny that the British attitude towards Sir Ali bin Abdul al Karim, Sultan of Lahej, would have been better kept quiet at this time, as it has no real bearing on the central problem*. The names are difficult. It is tempting to concentrate on whether "ibn" is the same as "bin" or merely a misprint. Even more tempting to give up and read about Mr. Peggs, 64 ("I fought Mitchell with a stick"). Let us reflect instead that there is just as much bewilderment on the other side, where coded messages in Arabic, flashed from Kuwait to

Jerusalem (Israel Side) and very possibly back, still haven't cottoned on to the fact that it is Brigadier Frisby who is in charge of the 24th Brigade, flown to the Aden-Yemen frontier from Kenya, and not Brigadier Tinker—who is, of course, military adviser to the Political Resident in Bahrein. Tinkers and Frisbys are easily interchangeable to the excitable Arab reporter, who in any case deals chiefly in Colonels, with Brigadier Shishakly an interesting exception. It is worth noting that, according to a reliable Damascus source, even President Nasser himself isn't always sure whether he is visiting Syrian troops on the Lebanon border or Lebanon troops on the Syrian border. Similarly, when *The Times* reported a week ago that sheep and goats were grazing right up to the Israel-Jordan demarcation line the implication was that if a few crossed over even the keenest U.N. observer might not notice.

So much for the bare outlines. It is important to stick to them. Once you start on the mental picture of a Summit within the U.N. framework you could fall forty feet and end up not knowing the difference between the Persian Gulf and Sir Wilfred Neden.

Within the framework of the broad outlines a number of over-all patterns may reward clarification of the major



issues. It may be simpler to put these in question and answer form:

1. (i) Why did the Swedish Prime Minister, Hr. Erlander, say that Mr. Khrushchev's proposals were "of special value"?
(ii) Could we ask the U.N. to brand him as an aggressor?
2. What will be the effect on men of the East Surrey Regiment, last heard of at London Airport, of reports that privates in the Sheikh of Kuwait's army get £52 a month?
3. (i) Are we going to sit down while the Premier of Iceland calls us "trigger-happy trawler-owners"?
(ii) Is this Iceland's attempt to enlist the sympathy of fishing authorities in Beirut?
4. Abdul Karim Kassem declared

*I need hardly tell you what that is.

5

that the new Irak is not against the West—"the very opposite." Does Moscow know this? Why did

- (a) Princess Margaret leave the Okanagan Valley without saying good-bye?
- (b) Mr. Frank Cousins fly to Amsterdam in a plaster jacket?
- (c) An Army bomb disposal unit sweep Bognor Regis beach with mine-detectors last Monday week?

6. Where is Neguib?

So much for the questions. It would be absurd to attempt to answer them in the brief space available. They might



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get outside the framework. But the possibilities should not be overlooked, as Mr. Macmillan said when he found he hadn't got his back-door key.

In the meantime we must remember that British prestige is at stake, and that photographs of Army stores flown to Jordan showed that these included cricket bats. It is safe to assume that Mr. Gomulka, General de Gaulle, Ali Abdel Rahman, Mr. Nehru, Hr. Erlander, Mr. Hammarskjöld, Senator Abdul Hadi Chalabi, Mr. Sobolev and the 5,600 British subjects still in Irak see this as one of the most hopeful signs so far.

Not Available

By B. A. YOUNG

It's a good thing everybody isn't as temperamental as some of our leading sportsmen

"BROWNDUFF not to go to B Kuria Muria" was the headline. The news item that followed it was quite short:

"General Sir Eugene Brownduff, selected by the War Office to head our forces in the Kuria Muria Isles, has announced that he will not be available.

'We have four young children,' he said, 'and we have just moved into a new house. In the circumstances I do not think it will be very convenient for me to take part in the Kuria Muria campaign.'

He will be replaced by Northern Command parachute-expert General Len Trowser."

General Brownduff was perfectly frank when I went to see him. "I got the idea from these cricketers," he told me. "After all, as that chap said, that poet chap, war is the image of cricket without its guilt and only fifty per cent of its boredom. I always say you never want to be afraid of picking up a good idea from anyone."

I asked him if he would explain more fully. "Well, there's this fellow Wardle," he replied, "who won't go to Australia to play unless somebody pays for his family to go out there with him—or has he changed his mind?—and then there's this other fellow Laker who said he wasn't going to go but quite rightly declined to say why not. Though I see now," he added, "that he says he *will* go after all, but he still won't say why he wasn't going to, which in a way makes it even more interesting, doesn't it?"

I asked the general why he saw any similarity between his own case and that of the cricketers. "We are all professionals, aren't we?" he told me. "They are paid to play cricket, and I am paid to fight."

I pointed out that Laker was paid by Surrey County Cricket Club and Wardle by Yorkshire, but that they were being asked to play for the M.C.C.; whereas his contract was with the War Office whether he was fighting in Kuria Muria or, as at present, in Aldershot.

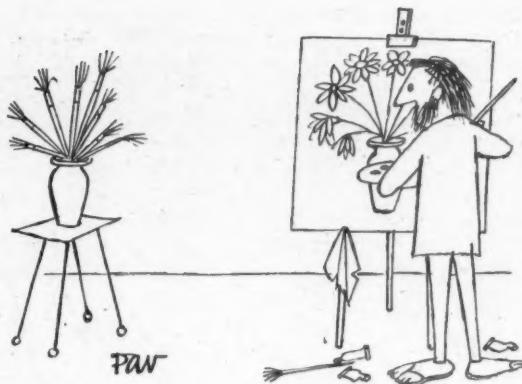
"Isn't that rather splitting hairs?"

he asked with a smile. "They couldn't play for Surrey or Yorkshire during the winter, could they? However," he added courteously, "I mustn't talk to you about cricket when I'm sure you want to ask me about war."

"Do you think," I asked him, "that your absence from the force will have any great effect on the campaign in Kuria Muria?"

The general poured himself out a whisky from an elegant cut-glass decanter. "I am sure that our forces will put up a good show there," he said, "and of course it must never be forgotten that they are a team, and the presence of one individual more or less is not a matter of importance."

"Naturally," he added, "it was bad luck their being defeated in Kuwait, Bahrein, Qatara, Trucial Oman, Muscat and Masira earlier in the tour, and I dare say they find it a bit discouraging being the only British troops left in the field between Malta and Mombasa; but I think I should be wrong to let a purely sentimental consideration of that kind take precedence over what I regard as my duty to my family."



Archbishop's Lullaby

"It may be within the Providence of God that the human race should destroy itself with nuclear weapons."—The Archbishop of Canterbury

WHERE are you going to, Baby dear?
Into the Everywhere straight from here.
You'll have no time to go badly wrong,
No time for Wine or Women or Song
Or even Dope, or Rock-and-Roll;
No time to save your Immortal Soul—
There'll be a big bang, but you won't
hear:

You'll be back where you started from,
Baby dear.

Why are you fretting, Mother dear?
God's in His Heaven, there's naught to
fear.

Seek not His wondrous works to ban
But be content with the Master-plan.

"The C.I.G.S. was a little disappointed when I told him I would not be available to command the force, but we are good friends and I believe I got him to see the form in the end; and I am told that apoplexy is not as dangerous as it used to be since the invention of all these antibiotics and so on."

I asked the general if he had any objection to my publishing what he had been saying to me. "Not at all," he assured me. Unfortunately, after I had left him I remembered that I should not be available to write my copy and telephone it through to the office, as I had promised to spend the evening baby-sitting for my sister. That is why the news item quoted above turned out to be so short.

Not a sparrow falls, without His
ruth,
So please try not to be so uncouth;
It ill becomes you to interfere—
Start counting your blessings, Mother
dear.

Think of the awful things you've
missed

You needn't consult a psychiatrist
Or bother your brains with Dr. Spock;
You'll never see Baby in the dock
Or need to read the *Observer* series:
For God will answer your high-flown
queries.

He may even tell you why Baby dear
Came out of the Everywhere into here.

KATHARINE DOWLING

LETTERS

(Letters addressed to the Editor, unless specifically marked otherwise, may be considered for publication.)

To the Editor of Punch

SIR,—Last week's issue contained the couplet:

*Let's creep about the world
With our colours tightly furled*
and the cartoon showed, two pages later, the dark shadow of Nationalism.

*Do not take pride in your people,
The patriot's creed is a sin:
There should be but one flag on the
steeple
So let's run up the flag of our kin.*

Yours faithfully,
JASPER MOON
Llanymynech, Mon.

J. A. SHEPHERD

To the Editor of Punch

SIR,—I was delighted to see the reproduction of an 1895 drawing by J. A. Shepherd, in my opinion the greatest animal caricaturist of any age. He was far ahead of his time in his outstanding style with its economy of line.

It says much for *Punch* that his genius was recognized so early. In 1895 I first saw a sample of his work in the American *Harper's Round Table* illustrating verses entitled "The Cocky English Sparrow." Thus I learned that the saucy little bird was an export from us to America and one which, through multiplication, she could now well do without.

Shepherd did innumerable drawings, all enlightened by the same acute observation, and many were published in the famous *Strand Magazine*. Maybe some day someone will collect and publish the best of his work. It shall never age nor shall its brilliance wane in its best epitaph. Yours faithfully,
W. B. HUNTRY

TRIBUTE

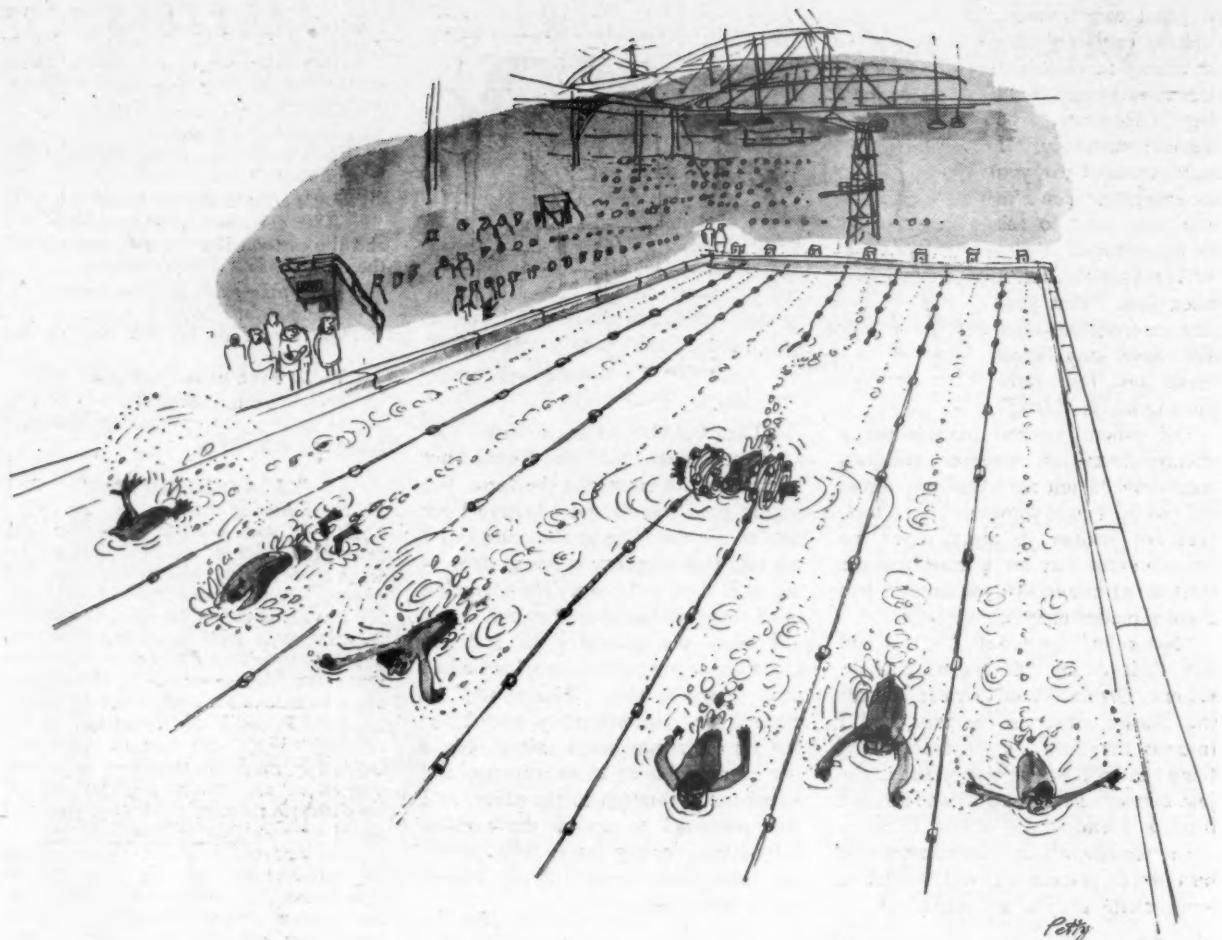
To the Editor of Punch

SIR,—I have been a regular reader of *Punch* for many years and it is a very long time since I enjoyed anything as much as the article by C. S. Lewis, "Revival or Decay?" in the Western Approaches series. I hope we may see more of such informative articles spiced with real wit. Yours gratefully,

H. ST. JOHN RUMSEY
Consulting Speech Therapist
to Guy's Hospital
London, N.W.1.

PUNCH DRAWINGS

A collection of *Punch* drawings and caricatures is on exhibition at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford and the Playhouse Theatre, Nottingham, for the next month. A similar exhibition is being held at the Saville Theatre, London, for three months.



Keeping Open House

By LORD KINROSS

THE Englishman's home, it used to be said, is his castle. But now his castle is becoming his public gallery, his waxwork show, his amusement park. Is it not time that in this democratic age our homes started to keep pace with our castles?

I had a reunion the other day with an old friend of mine, a rare visitor to London, who some twenty years ago married a stately home up in Lancashire. Being now, like most of his kind, impetuous, he and his wife have decided to open this home to the public. But since competition in this business grows hotter every day he has had to think up a new gimmick to help put the place across. And he has thought up what I take to be a winner. He has decided to make his stately home look *lived-in*.

This is a policy which nobody, neither the Duke of This nor the Marquis of That nor the Earl of T'other ever seriously thought of before. It is true that some years before the war, before this business got properly started, it was possible for half a crown to go round Knebworth House, admiring the portraits and relics of successive Earls of Lytton from room to room, until finally a door was flung open and the guide announced, in hushed and reverent tones, "And there you see the present Earl of Lytton, seated at ease in his library."

There was, it is true, a velvet rope across the door, so that you could not just stroll into the room and peer over his lordship's shoulder to see just which page of *The Times* he was reading.

But there he was before you, a real-life flesh-and-blood earl, living just as earls do live.

My Lancastrian friend the major—for so his publicity agents have advised him to style himself—proposes to go further than this. There will be no nonsense about velvet ropes. His half-crown visitors will be permitted to come right into the room and wander around it as though it were their own, patting his dog, stroking his cat, peering over his shoulder to read the letters he is writing at his writing-table, listening spellbound to the conversation which he is having over the telephone or to the argument in which he is engaged with his wife, as they sit in their armchairs before the fire, about the planting of the herbaceous border or the sacking

of the second housemaid. Later they will be privileged to watch the two of them at luncheon, carving the joint at the sideboard, and opening bottles of beer, and helping themselves to brussels sprouts and new potatoes.

It is true that the Earl and Countess of Pembroke and Montgomery admit visitors to their private apartments at Wilton House, and especially to her ladyship's bedroom, with her bedside books and her sleeping pills beside the bed, and her powders and face-creams and hairbrushes laid out on the dressing-table. But this is only by arrangement, on certain days, when the rooms are empty and the earl and countess themselves are not on show.

The major and his wife will improve on this. Their visitors will be able, if they are fortunate, to see one or other or even both of them actually *in* bed, or if they have just got up to see their beds unmade, and their breakfast trays uncleared, with cigarette ends in the butter dish, and the morning newspapers strewn around in disorder over the blankets, and the major's evening trousers, with his scarlet braces attached, lying on the floor of his dressing-room just as they fell when he took them off the night before.

In this the major—or perhaps it is his publicity adviser—shows a profound sense of sales psychology. For people, in my opinion, pay half-crowns to the owners of stately homes not to see Art but to see Life. They crave Human Interest. They want to know how the Other Half lives. They want to know, even more, how their Own Half lives. But since their neighbours are rather niggardly about admitting strangers to their houses, even for money, they have to make do with this Other Half, which is less so.

Is not this rather unneighbourly, rather undemocratic? Why should the owners of stately homes be the only ones to allow the public free run of their residences? Surely the owners of unstately homes should do the same—and with budgets as tight as they are at the moment it should be in their interests to do so.

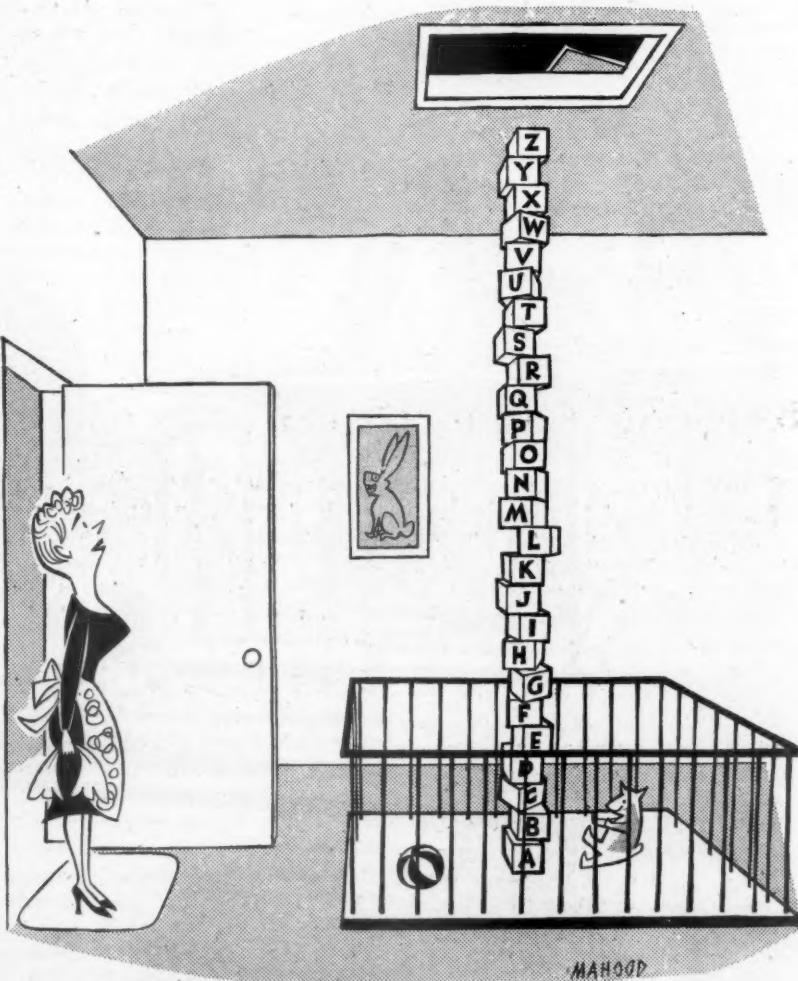
Millions of these homes exist all over the country. They could be bringing in to their owners millions of pounds. Take yourself. Perhaps you live, as I do, in a street of houses whose outward aspect is more or less identical. Several

times a day, as you go down this street, you must, as I do, wonder with a passionate curiosity what different sorts of lives are being led behind those identical front doors and those identical bay windows. If the Englishman's home were really his castle, in the up-to-date sense, you would be able to gratify this curiosity.

You would be able to walk up any garden path, peering closely at the lawns and the flower-beds as you did so; ring any door-bell; pay sixpence or a shilling at the door; enter the hallway, and roam at will around the house. You would be able to see just what your neighbours have done with that awkward-shaped parlour, whether they have furnished it in the Contemporary or the antique style, which room they use as a living-room, just where they have put the television set, how they

have dealt with the problem of cupboard space, whether they have been able to fit in an extra lavatory, how they heat the bath-water, whether they use gas or electricity in the kitchen, how they manage to fit all those children into the three small bedrooms, where they manage to find a corner for the teenager to do his homework without disturbing or being disturbed by the rest of the family—above all what they *do* all day long and in the evenings, how they arrange those lives which are so different from your own. Or aren't they?

The proper study of mankind is man. By such a system you would be able, for a modest outlay, to study Man, whereas now you can only study Architecture; to see Life, whereas now you can only see Art. The Americans have the right ideas about such things. When I was in Dallas, Texas, not long



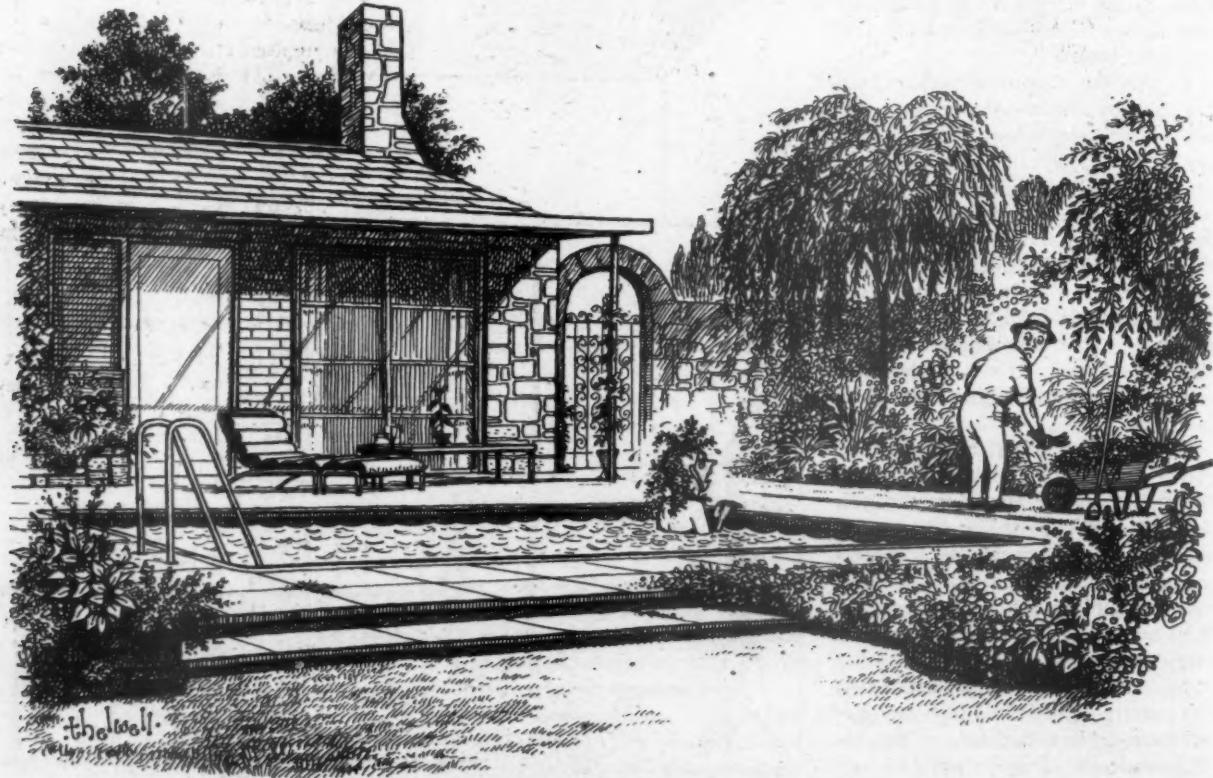
ago I found that, in aid of worthy charities, housewives were opening not merely their gardens but their *kitchens* to the public, and thus drawing in substantial sums of money. And here we all know that charity begins at home.

I am quite prepared, following the example of my friend the major, to become a pioneer of such a scheme, to open my unstately home in Paddington to all who care to pay a shilling, enabling them to view the disorder in which a poor bachelor journalist lives, together with his brave efforts to keep up his appearances before his handful of friends and acquaintances.

Provided, of course, that my neighbours will agree to do the same.

 & &

"The Old Vic Company will face a brilliant first night audience to-night when they present *Henry VIII* in the Paris International Theatre Festival . . . The play is likely to go down well. The French have always had a sneaking regard for the Merry Monarch . . ." — *The Star*
Nell Boleyn, too?



"You never think of weeding this thing."

The Debate Continues

(*The Swiss Government has decided to equip its army with atomic weapons*)

"SO now the Swiss succumb. A trifle late,
None the less welcome. Raise a dubious cheer;
The tumbril fills. On some approaching date,
With one almighty bang, which few will hear,
We shall all disappear."

"You're far too cynical, and I resent it.
When all have H-bombs, nothing will occur;
One most important factor will prevent it—
Fear of the consequences, my dear sir;
Such weapons must deter."

"Remember accidents. Remember chance.
Some word misread, some maniac's caprice,
Some twitch in some ambassadorial glance
As tempers flare and armaments increase
And what becomes of peace?"

"Peace waits on strength, it has to be conceded."
"As arms pile up, what home is Peace to choose?"
"The more there are, the less they will be needed."
"This is one race the human race will lose."
"Peace is the outcome." "Whose?"

RICHARD MALLETT

British Railways, spurred to greater efforts by their latest deficit of £27,000,000, have decided to take a tip from the B.B.C. and make a bit on the side by publishing a weekly. (Actual timetables will be found on pp. 5-798.)



THE TIMETABLE TIMES



Incorporating Bradshaw, The ABC Railway Guide, The Explosives Act, etc.

TRAINS OF THE WEEK

THURSLOE—BINSTEAD SPECIAL

On Friday the Ancient Order of Binsteadian Youth visits Thursloe for the yearly beetle-throwing match; B.R. have agreed to run a train along the famous Binstead-Thursloe line (closed last year for reasons of economy) and have taken the opportunity to try out their new undamageable rolling-stock on the return journey (RC). The new carriage, designed to meet the needs of footballing areas, is planned to come into full production in 1978.

THE DAILY-BREADER

The ever-popular 8.06 a.m. from Winford will now N but no longer nn, except L.

THE GOURMAND

Several 1955 vintages (bb) have been added to the wine list of the RC of the renowned 6.49 p.m. from King's Cross. The train will V, owing to experiments in oak-firing the engine, with the object of providing oak-smoked kippers for THE GOURMAND's companion train THE BREAKFASTER (ff).

THE HOLIDAYMAKER

Excursionists to Flakeness this Saturday should not miss the 3.42 p.m. (so) to Stadchester. It is the last train out of Flakeness until Monday morning.

NOTES

bb	bottled in our Liverpool St. cellars
ff	one hour later on Sundays
L	Thursdays
N	call to take up passengers at Bleak Halt
nn	call to set down passengers at Bleak Halt
RC	Buffet Car
so	standing room only
V	arrive eight minutes later at Driffield Central

All-Star Cast

A brilliant team is being assembled to work the 10.18 out of Charing Cross next Monday on its nonstop journey through the green valleys of Kent to Sandwich, Deal and Dover. In addition to the popular combination of Arthur Duffy and Bob ("I've got a red") Mulligan on the footplate, there will be a new attraction at the guard's-van end in the person of chubby Fred Candlewick, who is making his first appearance on this run.

Add dapper Franco Zucchetto to preside over the pots and pans in the diner while chief steward Arthur Grimes ministers to the needs of the customers, and you have a crew that any passenger would be proud to travel with. Arthur is being assisted by second steward Ken Gribble on the vegetables and sixteen-year-old Mickey Finn, who will be in charge of the knives and forks.



Ken Gribble

No. 31815

Watching the veteran Mogul 31815 the other day as she puffed out of Tonbridge at the head of the afternoon slow to Ashford, we were reminded of the days when, as plain 815 of the South-Eastern and Chatham, she and her class were hailed as the last word in loco engineering.

Like so many immortal designs, 815 began life on the fertile drawing-board of the late R. E. L. Maunsell; in fact she and her sisters were the first original design that this great engineer contributed to the line.

On and Off the Rails

Passengers in the London area will be able to see 31815 this week on the 9.12 from Victoria to Paddock Wood, via Orpington and Sevenoaks.

Special Occasion

Trains will be running to Widlescombe on Tuesday, when the villagers celebrate the annual custom of the Bellows Run.

In this custom, all the able-bodied men and boys of the village run from the village green to the church, puffing in at all the windows with their bellows. "It began in the twelfth century," says rural district councillor Paul Jennings. "It's supposed to symbolize the occasion when an old lady named Gammer Hockenbury blew the Devil out of Widlescombe with a pair of bellows."

Formerly the custom was only watched by the villagers themselves, but since the invention of the railway it has been possible for visitors to arrive from all over England to see it.

Hold on to Your Hats!

There should be some exciting moments on Thursday evening when the *Jaywick Sands Belle* comes into Liverpool Street on her first run since the tightening of the schedule by three minutes.

"We'll run the new schedule if the Union confirms it," says tiresome driver Jack Miaskowski, "but it's putting a new strain on the crew, and if the Union rules against it you can take it from me we'll pull up where we stand when we hear of it."

So watch out, passengers, for some unusual moments next Thursday!

The Railwaymen

The Fashion Now Due . . .

These two "House of Charing Cross" designs (modelled here by Porteress Eadne Chatty and Porter Jack Peasmash) will be on free issue at Bricklayer's Arms goods depot shortly. They have been named respectively "Steam at Dusk" and "Shunter's Kiss." "Steam at Dusk" is as romantic as its name, a long-legged little summer-weight number in grit-resistant sailcloth; gently gathered at the waist, the coat flares roguishly, and combines the chic with the practical in its hem-stitched tail

clipper-pocket; the tip-tilted, come-hither képi beguiles with a baby-doll bow at the back. In turquoise, lupin blue, soot-black, fish. Few railwaymen could fail to be flattered by the stark virility of "Shunter's Kiss," a fitted jacketless two-piece instinct with poise and breeding. Finely banded with braid in choice of Regional colours, it may be had in charcoal, railwayhorse or the faintest red pinstripe on blue. With it, boots.



Menu of the Week

DON'T you sometimes long for something, as you rattle over the points, that will bring out the real dining-car quality in your lunch? Next time you are faced with three hungry sittings to satisfy on a long run, I suggest you might give them:

Consommé Tiède

Beef Rôti

Choux Noyés

Pommes à l'Eau

Pouding de Suet

Mélasse

Confiture

Fromage—Pain—Beurre—Eau

For your consommé, make a thick roux with flour and water and add a little browning until the mixture is a fulvous yellow. Then add sufficient

By Hilary Train

water from your choux to your roux to bring the consommé to the consistency of buttermilk and serve when it is cool enough for the steward to immerse his thumb in it without discomfort.

If you feel that your guests are the kind who would be willing to pay an extra three shillings for another course, I recommend Mock Fish, which you can serve in between the soup and the roast beef. Here is a simple recipe:

Take a square of old rubber sheeting and simmer gently until thoroughly flabby. While you are doing this, cream half a pound of cotton wool with lard, add salt, pepper and the teeth of an old plastic comb, and warm gently in a double saucepan. To serve, cut the sheeting into neat squares and wrap the cotton wool inside. Conceal under a thin slush of white sauce and decorate with chopped parsley.

PUFFS FROM THE PAST

THE PIDDLINGTON RUNNER

THE "tall tunnel" on the Driffield-Slackhouse line still sometimes takes inexperienced travellers by surprise with the odd noise the train makes as it goes through it; the drumming of the wheels drops, not to the usual *wump-a-tata*, but to "more of a *woosh-chk-chuk-chuk*," as a regular passenger once said to me. But many of the regular passengers, even, are not aware that the tunnel was built eight feet higher than any other tunnel in the British Isles in order to accommodate the enormous over-head beam of Pidlington's famous *Runner*, which plied along that stretch of line from 1828 to 1843.

Josiah Pidlington was remarkable, even in an age of rule-of-thumb engineering, for his inability to read or write. His first adventure in steam was the construction, in his uncle's forge at the age of eighteen, of his reverse-action pumping engine, which he entered for a competition promoted by some colliery owners who wished to drain flooded mine-shafts. After Pidlington's engine had been in action for a week the level of water in his shaft was found to have risen by some twenty feet, but the Earl of Howbury was so impressed by the noise it made that he bought it and installed it on the battlements at Howe as an owl-scarer.

With some capital to his name Pidlington was now able to set up his own works. He adopted the method, so suited to his own genius, of improvising his engines before deciding on their function, but such was his enthusiasm and range of fancy that he was soon able to satisfy most of his clients with something approaching what they wanted. The *Runner* was, unfortunately, the last engine he designed, as, after the Great Slackhouse Railway had bought it from him, it was found that he was the only man who could coax it into movement.

From the first the *Runner* created something of a furore: Wordsworth wrote a sonnet against it; two little booths, the remains of which can still be seen, had to be built at either end of the tunnel so that female passengers could insure against bats; the promoters had unwisely failed to secure the closure of the right of way along which they had built the line; the curious "pitching" motion caused by the over-head beam, which weighed sixteen tons, did not prove universally popular; and Pidlington's habit of taking his engine all over the country to compete in races (though he never actually raced, owing to the extreme width of the gauge his engine required) caused interruption in the service. Finally the company went into liquidation and the *Runner* was broken up, but the "tall tunnel" still speaks, for those who care to hear, of the romance of the early days of steam.

"ROCKET"

MEET THE TRACK FAMILY

WHEN I called to see him at his house near the marshalling yards at Clapham Junction I found Jack Track just home from his day's work.

"Same old journey every day," he told me, taking his boots off with a cheery grin. "Clapham Junction to Sevenoaks (Tubs Hill), changing at London Bridge, High Level, of course. Never miss."

"Why do they call you Britain's typical railway family?" I asked him.

Jack sank on to one of the old porter's barrows with which his sitting-room is furnished and gave a contented sigh.

"I suppose it's because we're typical of the British families that use our railways," he said. "But you'd like to meet the wife, I know."

Cynthia Track came in from the kitchen where she had been getting tea for the two youngsters, David and Dorothy. "I don't know what would happen to me if I didn't have their teas ready when they come in," she apologized. "Luckily I always come back from Victoria on the 4.18 after I've done my shopping, and that gets in at 4.23. The youngsters' train doesn't get in till 4.56, and so I have lots of time. We all have seasons, of course."

"I suppose the children still go on halves," I suggested.

"Yes," Mrs. Track said wistfully. "We did hope, Jack and I, that one day we should have enough family to—
to—" Her voice shook for a moment, but she pulled herself together. "To travel as a party at the reduced rate," she finished bravely.

"Never mind, lass," Jack said, putting a strong arm round her shoulders. "There's other things in life than reduced rates."

"Tell me," I said to change the subject, "is Grannie Track still living with you?"

"Ay," said a well-known voice, "Grannie Track's still living with them, and likely to be as long as she's able to get on the Broadstairs Belle for a day in the sun now and then." It was Grannie herself, home from her regular visit to the station book-stall for an evening paper. I thought I saw Jack's eyes light up as the tough old lady came in, but before he could say anything



Beginning next week, the five Tracks—not forgetting Tip, their dog—start their adventures as Britain's typical railway family. Here they are sitting on their favourite bench on the platform. Tip is on the left, then Dorothy and David, Grandma Track, Mrs. Track and Jack Track himself on the right.

there was a great scuffling outside. It was the children, David (14) and Dorothy (12).

"Mummy, mummy, what do you think?" cried David, not seeing me in his excitement. "The most super thing! I went to the guard's van to collect Tip, and who do you think was standing there?"

"George Stephenson, I dare say," said Jack teasingly.

"No—Sir Brian Robertson!" David's eyes sparkled with animation. (*What was Sir Brian Robertson doing in the guard's van? Be sure to meet the Track Family in these pages again next week.*)

MAUREEN FLANAGAN

A CENTURY OF SLOT MACHINES



1. *Ducel-Meurice cast standard, twin service model with double action delivery slides.*



2. *Cladburn "Trojan", cast standard, 7-tray model. A fine example of an early marque. The simple gearing gives positive delivery.*



3. *Single unit wall mounting in pressed steel with provision for every fifth delivery to be free. This popular model was made by the Detroit Automac Corp.*



4. *Flush fitting twin model useful where space is limited and interesting for its reciprocating coin delivery chutes. Autoco, Woolwich.*

THE TRAIN NOW STANDING by Thursby Finch

TO-DAY, when scarcely a station in the land is without its own tiny but perfectly-formed broadcasting system, it seems incredible that when Bertram Drown first donned his railwayman's hat in 1937 the up-trains at Little Kimble were still coming in to cries, by the unaided human voice, of "Monks Risborough, Saunderton, West Wycombe, High Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Seer Green and Jordans, Gerrards Cross, Denham Golf Club, West Ruislip, Ruislip Gardens, South Ruislip and Marylebone."

Engaged



Sheila Cabbage and Bertram Drown

all stations to moon? Right, Little Kimble!

Other Platform

The unaided human voice, though Drown didn't know it at the time, belonged to none other than attractive brunette Sheila Cabbage. He remembers even to-day the warm cadences of the repeated Ruislips. His duties kept him on the other platform, however, and try as he would to catch a glimpse of the voice's fair owner, the incoming train invariably blocked his view. Then came the dark days of the war, when even porters on the same platform couldn't see each other, and with the installation of a tiny but perfectly-formed broadcasting system at Marylebone, Miss Cabbage was seconded there for the announcer's duties for which she was so eminently fitted.

Boakes

But Drown never forgot. His ambition had been fired. All through the long years of pigeon-loading, buffet-sweeping and whitewashing platform-edges he knew that one day he, too, must graduate to the high responsibility of station announcer. His repeated applications for the work so impressed the then stationmaster at Little Kimble, a Mr. Saul Boakes, that he agreed to give Bertram personal elocution lessons during times of strike, go-slow and similarly slack periods, and it was largely as a result of his assistance with difficult words (for years Bertram pronounced Beaconsfield "Beaconsfield") that he was at last appointed S.S.M. (Station Studio Manager) at Marylebone.

Were As

And was he surprised when he climbed the steps to the announcer's box and found Sheila Cabbage at the microphone? No. For he had heard an announcement on the way—and those limpid Ruislips, even under the miracle of railway amplification, were as unmistakable as ever.

Little Kimble

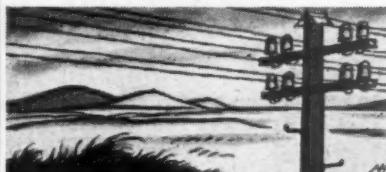
And all this, incidentally, is just by way of saying that on August Bank Holiday Miss Sheila Cabbage is to become Mrs. Bertram Drown. They share the Marylebone programmes now.

So if you fancy you detect a romantic intonation in that request for a passenger to call at the Stationmaster's Office—whether the voice be male or female—well, you'll know why. And, by the way, care to guess where the happy couple are spending their honeymoon?

FANCY THAT!

Goods Driver Albert Truro was held up by a cow on the line, but had no sooner chased it away than another appeared. The operation was repeated no fewer than eleven times before Truro realized that the animals were escaping from one of his own trucks and overtaking him in tunnels.

COMPETITIONS:



(1) A. Clackheath Moor. B. Shean Dhurraigh Pass. C. The Gargles.



(2) A. Outskirts of Durborough. B. West Snaggett. C. Somewhere in Wales.



(3) A. Borley Dump. B. Fennel Dump. C. Tregathrin Dump.

SPOT THE VIEW

Study the three views on the left. When you have decided which of the titles under each is the right one, enter A, B or C, as the case may be, in the appropriate square in the cut-out panel below. Then cut the panel out and glue it *lightly* to a P.C. Write on the rest of the P.C. your name and address, which view you prefer, and (in not more than eight words) why. Post the P.C. to "Spot the View Competition," Room 5023, Railway House, Marylebone. The Stationmaster's decision is final.

CUT					
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>

RESULT

Last Week's "Brighter Platform Ticket" competition was won by Lord Edward Breech, of 51 Manor Road, Howick. "I have always been interested in trains," says Lord Edward, "since I noticed a railway engine with the same name as my father*." Lord Edward's winning entry is reproduced below.

* The "Duke of Dunstable": 4-6-0.—Ed.



FOR CONDITIONS AND
JOKES—SEE OVER



The New Patronage

THE announcement that the programme contractors of independent television are to dole out at least £100,000 a year to needy branches of the arts has touched off a most interesting argument among economists and kindred social philosophers. One group, by far the larger, accepts the new form of patronage as necessary, desirable and inevitable: the other group, consisting of political wingers of the extreme left and right, is implacably opposed to any extension of the extra-mural or ex-factory interests of private enterprise.

At present the amount contributed annually by industry to the arts (education aside) is about £300,000. Most of this money comes from the great trusts and foundations—Carnegie, Pilgrim, Gulbenkian, Ford and Rockefeller—but sizable amounts are granted annually or from time to time by many of the big "blue chip" companies. Guinness award poetry prizes, Schweppes have supported a Royal Court Theatre play production, Gillette have backed the Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park, I.C.I., Rolls-Royce and Dorman Long have all waded in with help for the reps.

Without this help many amateur theatres, art galleries, museums, learned societies and other cultural bodies would be in a bad way, for private patronage is a well made arid by taxation and death duties, and by their nature and the nature of competition from the mass-media of entertainment (TV, the cinema and sport) they are unable to make ends meet through their own efforts.

Critics of industrial patronage maintain that it is no part of the function of private enterprise to bolster up uneconomic, uncommercial ventures in the arts, that private enterprise should at all times be true to the primordial law of the survival of the fittest, and that the board-room's job is to pay out maximum dividends to shareholders

and not to fritter away a company's economies in long-haired benefactions.

Critics of the Left argue that industrial patronage is dictatorial, that boards of directors have no right to control the shape and pattern of the nation's cultural life—and have no qualifications as arbiters of public taste.

Anyone who studies television at all closely will agree, I think, that the programme companies are completely justified in making their grants. Already the amount of talent available to the contractors is seen to be dangerously thin, and if the quality of programmes is to be improved some form of ploughing-in and re-investment seems essential. The grants to the repertory societies, music and ballet and painting, can very properly be regarded as an example



Nature's Iron Curtain

TO make a rough guesstimate I would say that the length of the hedges in England could girdle the earth about three and a half times. The area we dedicate to these pretty barricades which are supposed to separate one tiny handkerchief of a field from another must be about one-twentieth of our entire acreage. Although the bulldozer has flattened many of these warrens, the country still looks like a patchwork quilt made from rags and remnants. From an aeroplane it looks as if hedges were our most valued crop. Certainly, farmers have to devote as much time to keeping them up as they spend on maintaining the fertility of the pastures which the hedges define. In spite of this rural dedication to paring the bramble, cutting back the thorn, and steeping the alder, most of our hedges are quite ineffective for anything but as a couch for a recumbent tramp. A cow with a gadfly behind it will barge through the best steeped hedge. And of course any sow will go through any bank anywhere.

To find an effective barrier against your neighbour, or rather his stock,

of vertical combination—the contractors trying to assure themselves in the future of a reasonable quantity of raw material. Associated Rediffusion has already given £5,000 to the Tate Gallery, ABC Television has promised a like sum to Sadler's Wells. And it is only natural that Fleet Street itself should be thinking in terms of a cap-in-hand approach to the tycoons of the telly.

Why not? If TV kills the press where will the programme contractors find the "balance," their political and social commentators, their panelists, quiz experts and so on? Where will they find people capable of explaining industry and government and private enterprise to the masses?

And people qualified to talk at length about the Freedom of the Press?

MAMMON

* * *

becomes an obsession to anybody who lives in the country. Barbed wire has its points, but it is unsightly; it provides no shelter or shade; when the posts rot or the staples rust it will slacken. Electric fences too are no substitute for a hedge: they are too expensive for anything but a fence in kale or a paddock.

During the last war I experimented trying to grow a dual-purpose hedge: one which was both productive and at the same time impenetrable. My first stop was gooseberries. It is just as prickly as thorn or bramble. But I soon found that by letting the bushes go unpruned in order to provide the thickest barrier they then failed to yield any fruit. Raspberries and loganberries were useless for similar reasons. The most successful hedge I have seen is at Westward Ho! It is as solid as a wall, not even a frightened piglet could penetrate it. Common bramble roots were heeled in on the flat about a foot apart; the following year after these were established, honeysuckle was planted in between the brambles. Both, being indigenous, thrive rankly here: the bramble provide a trellis for the honeysuckle, the tough vines of the latter bind the former into position. During this month this particular hedge looks and smells like Circe's Bower, but at the same time it is almost as impenetrable as a Devonian's mind.

RONALD DUNCAN

2 2

"Advertising and Marketing.—You probably have a first-class honours degree and are under 25. You are of either sex . . ."

Advertisement in *The Times*

How did you guess?

You Could have Heard a Seal Bark

Walt Disney's latest contribution to the cinema is Circorama

By KENNETH J. ROBINSON

"HOW," asked my elegant companion, "do you like your fellow creatures?" A large, hot, cross-section of them was engulfing us at a density that would have offended many a self-respecting by-law. "God," murmured the choir, "Bless America"—and off we shot, with an awesome roar, along the New York waterfront, through Times Square and into a New England village. "Symbol," said a disembodied (how we envied it) voice, "of a God-fearing nation." And then a gasp elbowed out of the crowd as we slid abruptly on to a mountain pass, glancing anxiously behind us at pursuing traffic. Soon we were flying high over San Francisco, zooming low along the Grand Canyon, creeping at tug's pace in New York harbour . . .

All around us doors clanked open. Our eighteen minutes were up; our Experience was over—unless we liked to join the queue, as it waited, soggy with the amplified dripping of violins,

for the show to begin again. This was—this is—Circorama. It hides in a bare little entertainment chamber (standing all parts, and the very latest thing in discomfort) behind the big drum of the American pavilion at the Brussels Fair.

If the theme of the main pavilion is "Don't Let's Brag"—and that is what it is said to be—it has been forgotten here. The diabolical choir and the hyperbolical commentary are out to sell the United States inside Disney's round cinema. But for those who come not to appraise but to bury Circorama's sermon with cries of ecstasy this is merely a machine for being dizzy in. It is a showman's joke: not a sinister one, like the "Feelies," but a joke with just a touch of the macabre—a joke that belongs more to Thurber than to Huxley. Who but Thurber could have thought of a film that creeps up behind you and makes you reach for your driving mirror? But Thurberesqueness ends here: there is no war between Men

and Women, no drama at all, in fact—no indication that this device could ever be more than a superb toy.

The show is only really successful when the cameras (eleven were mounted, with synchronized shutters, on a circular base) are on the move. Once the movement stops, the illusion of reality is lost. Although the 16 mm. projectors flanking the circular wall of the cinema (45 ft. diameter) are perfectly synchronized, there are some disturbingly unco-ordinated jiggles on the eleven screens—far worse than the jiggles of Cinerama. These movements are barely noticeable when, for instance, we roar round Ford's car-testing track (Ford, incidentally, gave 200,000 dollars towards the making of this film); but they are worrying when the cameras are stationary, or moving through a crowd.

The crowd scenes suggest that Circorama would not be much good for drama. Although we accept the cinema convention that faces seen in front of us are several times lifesize, it is impossible to accept such a perspective-mad world if it surrounds us. Maybe someone like Orson Welles could make something of it ("All right, sergeant, you can get your boys to close in"). But if any serious dramatic action was put on to the circle of screens more than half the audience would miss it. Only the few standing right in the centre would know what was going on all the time—and even they would surely rush off, arch-fallen and neck-cracked, to the backs-to-the-wall cosiness of their 14-inch screens.

Circorama is exciting. It is worth seeing as the first *really* continuous film performance—continuous both forwards and sideways. But the Australian who saw it at Brussels and wanted to book it for a goose fair bark home was no funnier than he meant to be.



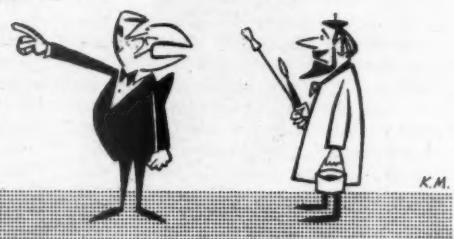
World Movements

"IRAQ
BLAZE
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BOOM"

Newsreel contents bill

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CRITICISM



BOOKING OFFICE

Gissing Time

New Grub Street. George Gissing. With an introduction by G. W. Stonier. *World's Classics*, O.U.P., 9/6.

IN his excellent introduction to this edition of *New Grub Street* Mr. G. W. Stonier refers to George Orwell's admiration for George Gissing (1857-1903) as a writer. Mr. Stonier (who calls Gissing "the English Gorky, with butterfly collar") says that he is uncertain of the phrase Orwell used. I can bear out that Orwell thought Gissing the "greatest" English novelist. I remember him saying that in so many words. It seemed an extraordinary judgment then, when I knew only some of Gissing's minor novels; it seems even more extraordinary now, after reading *New Grub Street*.

The test was, of course, "Have you starved?" That was what Gissing used to ask; that was the approach so congenial to Orwell. But you might just as well inquire: "Have you eaten oysters and drunk champagne?" "Have you been in a cavalry charge?" "Have you ever cornered the pepper market?" . . . Certain experiences may intensify the characteristics of a novelist; they cannot do more than that. They certainly cannot, in themselves, make him great.

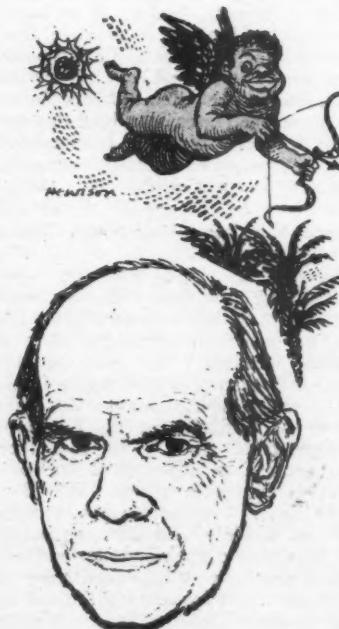
New Grub Street, published in 1891, depicts the lowest depths of the literary world, the struggles, the jealousies, the poverty. I think there can be no doubt that the picture Gissing gives of down-trodden authors, rapacious publishers, and venal reviewers is one that deeply impressed itself upon the non-literary public, even into our own day. As we turn the pages we seem to hear the voices of people who know of writing and journalism only at second-hand making polite conversation on the subject based upon Gissing's models.

It was his aim to show this world in all its ordinariness—indeed, all its dullness: the ever-present horror of lack of independence and lack of money struggling with love of literature and an icy horror of falling from the middle

into the lower class. Nothing was to alleviate the picture. There were to be no brilliant flashes of light, no humour, no success.

Jasper Milvain, the unscrupulous reviewer who accepts conditions as they are, is contrasted with Edwin Reardon, author of two books (the fine qualities of which we have to take on trust) and Harold Biffen, a poor, eccentric scholar who earns a precarious livelihood by coaching would-be customs officers in English composition. Milvain jilts Marian Yule when he finds she is not going to inherit £5,000, and finally marries Reardon's widow, Amy, who had driven her first husband into an early grave by nagging at him to get on with his next novel.

NOVEL FACES



XXVII—ALEC WAUGH

*Laurels the Loom of Youth so hardly won
Fade not transferred to Islands in the Sun.*

The objection to the book seems to me to be not so much that it is not true but that it is not alive. I do not doubt that there were, outwardly speaking, many people like those described in *New Grub Street* who existed painfully in the 'seventies and 'eighties in just this manner. For that matter there are people who exist painfully on the outskirts of literature and journalism in that manner to this day.

But somehow Gissing's refusal to paint in anything but monochrome does not produce quite the right effect. Dickens may sentimentalize, caricature, propagand, over-simplify, distort, yet he always retains a terrifying vitality. It is hard to disagree with Dickens. He carries us along. Gissing, on the other hand, at times fails to convince. We have an uneasy feeling that, in spite of his integrity, Reardon was an intensely boring writer, that, notwithstanding his low moral qualities, Milvain might easily have been the more readable of the two.

All the same, you cannot entirely laugh Gissing off. This attempt to cope with life, not only at its most disagreeable but also at its most humdrum, is an honourable ambition in a novelist. No one would deny many of the points he makes. Yet in the end the rounded periods his characters talk, the manner in which they always express a limited point of view, his obsession with money, each in its turn seems to defeat Gissing's own ends. If literary men are as boring, unimaginative and self-pitying as this, why don't they take on some other job, we ask ourselves.

And yet, as one thinks of the lives of writers one has known, of literary squabbles and literary rackets, of the whole race of authors, publishers and critics jogging along the road like the procession in *Goblin Market*, it is easy to see what Gissing meant. The trouble was, as Mr. Stonier so truly remarks, "he lacks the fairy or imp of entertainment." He was too intense. He could not stand for a few minutes apart from his own ideas.

ANTHONY POWELL

Edwardian Daughter. Sonia Keppel. *Hamish Hamilton, 21/-*

Born in 1900 and brought up at the very centre of Edwardian society, Miss Sonia Keppel (Mrs. Cubitt) takes her autobiography as far as her marriage in 1920. Already it might be a fairy tale, so far are we now removed from this final and glittering fling of privilege naturally assumed. King Edward, calling on Mamma, allowed her infant daughter to race bits of bread-and-butter down his trouser legs for penny bets. And Mrs. Asquith, to cure her shyness, placed her at fifteen at a Downing Street luncheon between the Prime Minister and Lord Kitchener, when Kitchener was so rude that she came home in tears.

Inevitably her book is studded with great names and great houses, but fortunately she found them funny and had a sharp eye for character. Her account of a very happy and now fantastic childhood is an entertaining slice of social history, raised considerably above the gossip level by her wit, sometimes a little malicious, and her humanity.

E. O. D. K.

The Wandering Albatross. William Jameson. *Rupert Hart-Davis, 16/-*

Monographs on birds are usually written by men who have made a close personal study of a particular species. Their authors sit for days on end in high trees with notebooks and stop-watches, or embed themselves in church towers to catalogue the goings-on of swifts. Admiral Jameson would make no such claim. He is, on the evidence of this book, more of an anthologist than an ornithologist. Serving in the *Ark Royal*

south of the Cape in 1940 he saw the majestic Wandering Albatross patrolling the lonely South Atlantic seas and determined to find out all about it, or in his own words "to assemble information about the greatest sea-bird in the world." He has searched far and wide (in books) and the result is valuable and interesting—the assembled information is skilfully used. There is a fascinating chapter on the dynamics of gliding, and the photographs are good. But one does miss (except in the opening pages) the note of direct personal experience. Its absence is understandable enough. To observe an albatross from egg to first flight it would be necessary to spend a whole year on a desolate island in the sub-Antarctic zone. H. F. E.

Murphy. Samuel Beckett. *Evergreen Books, 10/6*

First published in 1938, this novel has a hero whose pursuit of inertia begins with a habit of strapping himself naked in a rocking-chair, and continues (successfully) inside the Magdalen Mercyscat, a mental home where Murphy becomes an envious warden to some choice initiates of his cult. Add that the Mercyscat is presided over by types called Bim, Bom and Bum, and that Murphy himself ends up peacefully in the incinerator, and you see what it is: *très Beckett*.

With a difference, however. *Murphy* is remote from Mr. Beckett's earlier *Molloy* as fresh Roquefort from stale. Here, instead of monomania, we have a genuine comedy not of manners but of appetites, as stylized in its own way as Firbank or Compton Burnett. And within the limits the characters are very much alive, from Miss Counihan ("unusually anthropoid" for an Irishwoman, and easy as to whom she pleases in her pursuit of Murphy) to Nearly, who relapses into bedsores and apathy whenever his chase is successful. Style is terse, inwrought, but effective: to be read in small doses. D. P.

Gainsborough. Ellis Waterhouse. *Edward Hulton, 6½ gns.*

Gainsborough and Reynolds were rivals during their lives and, ever since, changing taste has accorded first one then the other the foremost place in English painting. In most people's minds their names are so firmly linked that the more disingenuous occasionally confess to difficulty in distinguishing between their work. In fact their paintings are as different as the proverbial chalk and cheese, like their personalities. Reynolds was serious, studious, worldly and an outstanding P.R.A.; Gainsborough spontaneous, unbookish and unworldly, quarrelled with the Academy and seldom exhibited his finest works. These traits of character emerge clearly in their paintings.

Professor Waterhouse, the leading authority on British portraiture, has now followed up his war-time book on Reynolds with this even more splendidly

produced volume on Gainsborough containing nearly three hundred black-and-white reproductions (and a few colour-plates best passed over in silence). In addition it includes a catalogue of all the artist's recorded paintings and a short but very judicious introduction which should leave even the most innocent art-lover no further excuse for confusion between these two great artists. F. W.

Cocktail Time. P. G. Wodehouse. *Herbert Jenkins, 12/6*

When a man has been writing as long as Wodehouse even a faithful public begins to listen for a pinking in the creative machinery. But in vain. Another work falls from the master's typewriter, and is as rich in plot, character and invention as ever. Simile flows, metaphor flies, poetic and scriptural allusions stud the pages as richly as before. It takes Wodehouse to seize our attention with events stemming from brazil nuts shot by catapult from a club window by a peer of the realm, and to hold it through 222 pages, with an average of two laughs per page. "A cow was paddling in the shallows," says one of those purely descriptive passages, "and normally Lord Ickenham would have paused to throw a bit of stick at it, but now he hurried on, too preoccupied to do the civil thing." Anyone care to beat this?

J. B. B.

Young Egypt. Desmond Stewart. *Wingate, 18/-*

It would be an exaggeration to call this a good book; the blend of historical analysis and personal reminiscence is not well handled. A writer trying to persuade an obstinate public to revise all its old ideas about Egypt ought not to slip off into a long and boring account of an evening spent smoking hashish; he makes it harder to take him seriously, and Mr. Stewart is desperately serious. All the same, this is an interesting book, and a useful one. The author is one of those odd Britons who seem more at home in the Middle East than in their own land; he clearly loves the Egyptians, and he presents Egyptian affairs since Napoleon's occupation in 1798 in such a light as to show how badly they have always been treated by French, British and Turks, and what fine chaps they really are, especially Colonel Nasser. A couple of temperate hours spent reading *Young Egypt* are certainly desirable before one presumes to lay down the law about the Middle East to-day.

B. A. Y.

Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland, 1641-1702. J. P. Kenyon. *Longmans, 45/-*

Historian after historian has pointed the finger of reprobation at the second Earl of Sunderland, that prince of double-dealers and double-crossers who contrived to be both exclusionist and King James's principal minister, Papist, francophil and confidential adviser to William the Deliverer. But Dr. Kenyon



"No, sir, it means G.I.—a 'G' crossed with an 'I.'"

is the first to have investigated in detail, and sought a rational and credible explanation of the course of a life which Macaulay described, with unusual moderation, as "ignominious and disastrous." To a fine exactitude of scholarship Dr. Kenyon adds an aptitude for lively writing and a realistic intelligence, with a touch of cynicism highly appropriate to his theme. The independence of his judgment is evidenced in his contemptuous estimate of Halifax and in his considered verdict that Sunderland, whose blunders he does not minimize and whose treacheries he does nothing to extenuate, displayed in his final phase a genuinely constructive statecraft. If he cannot give perfect clarity to a scene of political confusion which Sunderland himself did so much to make worse confounded his book is certainly among the best of its kind.

F. B.

The Visitors. Mary McMinnies. *Collins*, 18/-

This long novel may not come off with equal success in all its numerous departments, but it has the over-riding virtue of carrying you along. There is always another episode, another character, a switch of attention from the Bovaryesque wife of the minor diplomat to the remnants of the Polish aristocracy or the black market or the American journalist or the children or the parties. Poorish material is slapped in together with much subtler work, like the variation in the intensity of the latent, ever-present fear. The funny bits are very fresh and the malice is generally effective, though occasionally the hand holding the knife trembles adolescently. The central figure becomes a little tiresome because silly women are not really inexhaustible.

Mrs. McMinnies is unusual among modern novelists in having stronger narrative power than power of description or character drawing. Even if I am unable to greet *The Visitors* with quite such ravings as some of its admirers, throughout its nearly six hundred pages I wanted to know what happened next.

R. G. G. P.

AT THE PLAY

The Private Prosecutor
(ROYAL COURT)

CONTINUING its season of hospitality to repertory companies, the Royal Court brought us for a week the Salisbury Arts Theatre, in Thomas Wiseman's *The Private Prosecutor*. It also brought us our fourth frustrated son in five successive plays. In childhood this specimen, no more endearing than the rest, had been kept awake by his mother's lover, with the rather oblique result that on growing up he goes in for rape on Hampstead Heath and in moments of exaltation carries a gun. A sort of angry young man, but at

least it can be said for him that he is less self-pitying and far more energetic than Mr. Osborne's moaning archetype.

An attempt is being made to straighten his kinks and protect him from the police by a psychiatrist, with whose wife he has once been adolescently in love. This psychiatrist, always interfering in other people's marriages, is bound to make a mess of his own; icy and dehydrated, like most dedicated men he is deadly at home, and Mr. Wiseman takes a long time to prepare us for what we know in the first five minutes, that his wife will soon run away with somebody. The lot falls on the Hampstead boy, whom the police would have picked up easily but that he has to be kept at large for the big scene in which he brings his gun to the consulting-room.

Although stretched too far, this is quite exciting. To save his own life the doctor falls back on the verbal antics of his profession and slowly breaks the boy down. At this point the play becomes baffling, for as his victim goes off in convulsions with the police the doctor is overwhelmed by the thought that he has abused his sacred powers. It is as if, on knocking out a burglar with a well-aimed paper-weight, one was crushed by the shameful recollection of one's unfair skill at darts. I should have thought that

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(The Private Prosecutor)

Dr. Alan Warwick—IAN MULLINS

when confronted by an armed intruder any weapon was justified, whether Freud's Seventeenth Axiom or Uncle Joseph's old cutlass. The nicety of any other attitude seems merely silly. But to this strange, unhappy man his practice has ended. We leave him looking as if he has seen a regiment of ghosts, while his wife, foolishly and I should guess

REP SELECTION

Dundee Rep, *Odd Man In*, until August 9th
Oxford Playhouse, *A Hatful of Rain*, until August 2nd.
Ipswich Rep, *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, until August 2nd.
Lincoln, Theatre Royal, *Sailor Beware!*, until August 2nd.

briefly returned, begs him on her knees to carry on.

The play is slow and hoes every inch of ground. It is not so well acted as I expected, for the Salisbury Company can be good. The matrimonial warfare is curiously stilted, and the Inspector's loutish manners would long before have won him the sack. However, this leeway is partly regained by Michael Atkinson's

interesting and highly individual performance as the boy, whose exact degree of craziness is always hard to determine, and by Geoffrey Lumsden's worldly psychiatrist, who gives the play a much-needed jolt with his bustling attack on the dreariness of his joyless colleague.

Recommended

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

Irma la Douce (Lyric—23/7/58), much less innocent than in Paris, but still an original musical, very well produced. *Five Finger Exercise* (Comedy—23/7/58), domestic drama by talented new author. *Any Other Business* (Westminster—16/4/58), authentic board-room excitements.

ERIC KEOWN

AT THE PICTURES

Torero

Vive Monsieur Blaireau

The Golden Age of Comedy

I THINK the best film, in a pretty thin week, is the Mexican *Torero* (Director: Carlos Velo), but I know it is too much to hope that most of my readers



(The Golden Age of Comedy)

HARRY LANGDON

will take that statement as meaning exactly what it says. Many of them will furiously accuse me of being a supporter of bullfighting, and many more, admitting that the film may be well done, will declare that unless one approves of bullfighting one ought not to say it is.

The fact remains that from *Torero* I got, for the first time, some glimmering of what may be called the point of bullfighting, some idea of what those who do appreciate it see in it. It is a study of the life of a real bullfighter, Luis Procuna, who appears in person, photographed doing the things he really does do and actually on occasions when he did them. The frame of the narrative is what happened on the day of a particular fight in 1953, when it seems he "made bullfighting history." Within this, there are flashbacks showing how as a poor boy ("A rich man's son never becomes a bullfighter") he decided on his vocation, and what happened as he was trained for it.

It goes into his motives, it conveys an impression of his relationship with "the crowd," the thousands of people who watch him, it examines his attitude to his own invariable fear and his way of conquering it. Success in conveying the indefinable is hard to judge and still harder to describe, and I can only say that I think the film treats all these matters well. The first-person commentary, expressing Procuna's own thoughts and feelings and telling his story, is in English, but the original sound and Spanish words are unobtrusively audible beneath it. There is a certain amount of the irritating, over-dramatic, "fine writing" rhetoric that *aficionados* seem to find impressive, but much of the commentary is straightforward simple explanation, with an occasional sentence that sticks uneasily in the mind. A significant one: "It is not hard to conquer fear when one is more afraid of appearing ridiculous than of dying." The most memorable and disturbing passages of the film for many people are likely to be not the shots of action in the ring but the shots of faces in the crowd, yelling for blood—human blood.

There are two works in London now that together provide a peg for some observations about film comedy and the technique of arousing laughter. One is French, *Ni Vu... Ni Connu*, here called *Vive Monsieur Blaireau* (Director: Yves Robert)—if they had to translate one French title by another, I don't know why they didn't use that of the original novel, *L'Affaire Blaireau*—and the other is a one-hour collection of extracts from silent comedies of the middle and late nineteen-twenties called *The Golden Age of Comedy*, produced by Robert Youngson.

The fun in both films is essentially simple and obvious, and the thing they have in common is over-emphasis. In

my experience the nervous shock of utter unexpectedness in physical action springs a laugh almost every time, and in the old slapstick comedies this makes up for the perpetual labouring of three devices by which I used to be exasperated even then, thirty years ago. One is the convention of prolonged swaying about and dizziness, often accompanied by squinting, after a blow on the head; another is the convention that on being frightened one jumps into the air with arms outspread before running or otherwise reacting; a third is that ritual two-handed flourish with which anyone hit in the face by a custard pie proceeds to wipe it off. I recall even in those days being astonished that many people seemed to find these mechanical actions funny in themselves, every time . . . But it is splendid to see some of the old clowns again, particularly Harry Langdon and Laurel and Hardy. The main trouble with the picture is another form of over-emphasis, the heavily facetious alliterative commentary; but it is full of laughs.

The French piece is mannered, contrived, artificially gay, and most of the successful laughs are based on that same formula of sudden unexpectedness in action. Louis de Funes is a funny man, and there are ingeniously absurd devices in the plot (notably the situation where a man wrongly imprisoned finds his release impeded, not helped, by proof of innocence), but every point is rubbed in with too much determination.

Survey

(Dates in brackets refer to *Punch* reviews)

If *Ice Cold in Alex* (9/7/58) is still to be found, that's the best in London. The Finnish *The Unknown Soldier* (23/7/58) is a war film of a much harsher and more disturbing kind. *Harry Black* is good—more about it next week. The entertaining curiosity *Scandal in Montmartre* (2/7/58) and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (17/7/57) continue.

Best release: *The Key* (11/6/58), very good indeed. There are also a very good Western, *Man Hunt* ("Survey," 9/7/58), and Disney's *Perri* ("Survey," 1/1/58), which is better worth looking at than listening to. RICHARD MALLETT

AT THE OPERA

The Unicorn, the Gorgon and the Manticore—The Soldier's Tale
(SADLER'S WELLS)

Il Segreto di Susanna—Ariadne auf Naxos (GLYNDEBOURNE)

THE Unicorn (etc.), Gian-Carlo Menotti's latest, is out of a very different stable from his *Consul*, *The Saint of Bleecker Street* or even *The Telephone*. A handy short title would be Menotti's *Multiple Store*. In the pit are madrigal singers as well as a chamber orchestra. On the stage are crenellations, coifs, wimples, capering, miming, chequered legs and what not.

The story begins, "There once lived a Man in a Castle, and a very strange man he was." In what way strange? Well, for one thing, he didn't go to church on Sundays. (*A propos*, the young man who mimed and danced this part bore a strong resemblance to Mr. Kenneth Tynan). For another, he cherished out-of-the-way pets. The Queen's Beasts of the title were pretty in a slightly repulsive way. I strained my ears after the madrigal words without getting a clue as to their symbolical purport.

The local bourgeoisie hotly resent the Man in the Castle, apparently because he is Seer and Poet. Naturally, they come round to his ideas—after suitable time lags—and get them unicorns, gorgons and manticores of their own. After this there is nothing left for the Man in the Castle to do but lie down and die.

Here is a parable of sorts. But an insipid one. The same is to be said of the music. I am asked to take the smooth with the sweet. I rebel.

The production—by the New Opera Company, in association with Western Theatre Ballet—makes half a double bill. The other half is *The Soldier's Tale*. Stravinsky's score, now forty years old, has lost none of its bite and wry beauty. Ramuz's text, which opens with the Devil chasing souls with butterfly net and dangling pince-nez, is spoken in the excellent Michael Flanders—Kitty Black translation.

But why have Stravinsky's chamber orchestra annexing half the stage? An expedient devised for the first production, in the war-smitten and 'flu-riddled Central Europe of 1918, has absurdly become a fossilized fixture. The Soldier pretends to play his fiddle with the *real* fiddler sitting at a lighted desk three paces away. This is not in the least amusing and, bearing in mind problems of co-ordination, asks for trouble.

Il Segreto (about a bride's clandestine cigarette-smoking and the misunderstandings it provokes) comes in at Glyndebourne as curtain-raiser to *Ariadne*; and very welcome it is. Mary Costa (the bride) had too small a voice, Michel Roux (the husband) too sharp an edge on his. But both are good actors and delightful to watch against Carl Toms' toothsome 1909 drawing-room set. There is a seductive 1909-ness about the music, too. If I may be brazenly inconsistent, the smooth and the sweet in this case were good earmates, thanks in part to the spirited gaiety of John Pritchard's conducting.

Ariadne found Richard Lewis in uncommonly good voice; he is an expansive and stylish Bacchus. There were some who found Helga Pilarczyk's Composer a thought too opulent. I am still too much under the spell of this singer's marvellous performance in Schönberg's monologue opera *Erwartung* at Holland Festival to think a word



"No thanks—I'm trying to give it up."

against her. The new Zerbinetta, Rita Streich, sounded small of voice after her gramophone records, but her *fioriture* were poised and musicianly. Zerbinetta is supposed to be a dancer. Believe it or not, Miss Streich twice did a few steps *sur les pointes*. In the coloratura or any other vocal field this must be a record.

CHARLES REID

ON THE AIR

Introducing Music

THE army of unmusical music-lovers, to which I belong, must be enormous; rapt, ignorant, twelve-tone-deaf, all we really know about symphonic form is that we like the noise, but most of us would like to possess a little hoard of expertise, provided we don't have to work or think too hard for it. The BBC is always doing its best for us at all levels. The fascinating recordings of famous conductors rehearsing orchestras were well above my head, but programmes in the style of "Music to Remember" exactly suit me. It would be no use having an unpalliated lecture on a quartet and then playing the thing; what we want is a compère who will tell us what to think by suggesting that we, as intelligent music-lovers, already think it. Not all compères can achieve this without embarrassment; for Lord Harewood, for instance, it was evidently an unnatural level of communication. Antony Hopkins, on the other hand, usually manages to achieve exactly the right manner, neither condescending nor cosy. I have heard a few orchestral players attempt the same thing, but for the most part, being I suppose primarily interested in technique, they found it hard to communicate with an audience who (some of us at any rate) couldn't tell an oboe from an accordion without looking at the instrument. From time to time compères in this particular programme have the extra difficulty of persuading us to remember music that no one could, in a free world, call memorable.

We are perhaps less in danger of insult or awkwardness with programmes that have a pretence at a plot; The "Birth of an Opera" series are the best of these.

When an opera was first being staged there were bound to be tantrums, misunderstandings, disasters over scenery and money and countless other mishaps and despairings, and the tale of the misconduct of some famous, decades-dead tenor provides a splendid excuse for and contrast to the singing of his famous, still-living aria. Occasionally there is enough genuine plot, as in the case of *Otello* and *Falstaff*, to provide some very moving listening, but even when there is not, careful research and editing seem to produce exactly the right balance between stage tittle-tattle and passion for opera.

The less classical the music the more expository the speaker can afford to be. Alan Lomax's approach is so donnish that it always comes as a shock to hear the lecturer launch out into his next ballad instead of rapping for his next slide. I find listening to him an almost painfully emotional experience; the idea of a song surviving untranscribed, living and changing as new peoples sing it, is a real untrammelizer. Less disturbing, thank heavens, but no less interesting, has been most of "A Century of Song," which, with the help of some hard historical work and a very good sense of period in the singing, covered the growth of the music-halls and the development of the modern musical. The second half was not so successful, being touched with the horrible taint of indiscriminate praise for any work whose author might conceivably be living; so all shows were scintillating and ran for innumerable nights before ecstatic audiences.

This habit is at worst in the disc-jockeys and compères of the Light programme; I long to hear an announcer say of a record "I don't care for it myself but Trooper Gallows of B.A.O.R. has asked for it." Occasionally they let their own enthusiasm get the better of them; Wynford Vaughan Thomas worked himself up to such a pitch of fervour by the end of "Friday Night is Commonwealth Night" (it isn't always, but it was at the start of the Empire Games) that I was sure he was getting ready in his closing cadences for a smooth transition to the Benediction.

PETER DICKINSON

FOR
WOMEN

The King of Fashion

INTO the Paris of a hundred years ago, a Paris almost exclusively clad in faille and grosgrain, terry velvet and taffeta, there burst a young man in his middle thirties with a pair of walrus mustachios and a magical flair for fashion. His name was Charles Frederick Worth, and his influence has been such in the world of *haute couture* that to-day, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, there is an exhibition to mark his centenary. And this tribute, it seems, is far from being excessive: some say that the founder of the House of Worth, who established the Rue de la Paix as a centre of fashion, deserves to have his statue wrought of solid gold and set, in place of Napoleon's, on the *colonne Vendôme*.

The young *couturier* at 7 Rue de la Paix was not lacking in courage. When in 1859 the Princess de Metternich introduced him to the Empress Eugénie, when Worth's 300-franc dresses became a thing of the past, he arrived at the Tuilleries, in defiance of



protocol, wearing the banned frock-coat. No one could dictate a fashion to Worth. When the Empress suggested that his beige brocade dress made her look like a curtain, Worth imposed his will, the Empress wore the dress, beige became all the rage, and Lyons silk became a household word. Henceforward, whether France was imperial or republican, Worth remained the uncrowned king of fashion. If he decided to remove the bavocet from a hat, to expose (oh, daring venture!) a woman's neck and chignon, bavocets were removed, and necks and chignons exposed. If he created scalloped and pleated flounces, introduced the ruche, *le tout Paris* appeared in ruches and flounces. If he decided that jet must be worn, jet was promptly worn. And when the Marquise de Manzanedo was observed wearing muslin in the freezing winter of 1870 she explained quite simply: "But Worth is closed. How can I have new winter dresses?"

Cradle Song

THE pitfalls are many, O mothers! and deep.
Don't frown at your baby, awake or asleep.
Don't sit him or stand him or give him a shake;
Don't laugh at your baby, asleep or awake.

All sweets are forbidden, all toys are taboo;
All fairy tales scary, and nursery rhymes too.
Beware of a name he will always detest,
Or the dark inhibition of bows on his vest.

Don't cuddle or kiss him or smack him or drop him;
Don't let him or help him or warn him or stop him;
Don't praise him or blame him or make him feel small;
And don't let him guess you're his mother at all.

HAZEL TOWNSON

The Second Empire was, in fact, dressed by Worth. Every Friday Mme. Musard, the fabulous *demi-mondaine*, would send her rubies or emeralds to be sewn on her latest dress (naturally she never wore the same dress twice). Every Friday Worth dispatched one, two or three dresses to Mrs. Erazu, the legendary Mexican, to wear the coming week at the Opéra; on Tuesdays he sent her a dress for the Italiens. When the Duchess of Medina-Celi was asked to a fancy-dress ball she merely sent a telegram to Worth, and back came a mermaid costume complete with mermaid wig and pearls and shells. When the Empress Eugénie presented two dresses to the Queen of Madagascar it was Worth who conjured up a miracle in red velvet embroidered in silver, and a green dress (complete with crinoline) embroidered in pearls and gold. The Queen of Madagascar, overjoyed, summoned the French Ambassador to express her thanks to him: he found her standing barefoot under a tree, resplendent in the red velvet. The crinoline, used as a canopy, was hanging in the branches overhead.

The regal tradition in *haute couture* was continued by the sons and grandsons of Worth, and the Czarina (dressed by a Worth) who sent for Nellie Melba during an interval of *Lohengrin* found that her golden costume came from the same House. Queen Victoria, as one might expect, resolutely bought British, but Worth sold her dresses through English dressmakers and delightedly watched her as she wore them, "untainted by alien handiwork."

But Queen Victoria was never wrong. In supporting Worth she was in fact buying British. For the man who revolutionized Paris fashion, the man who seemed more Parisian than the Parisians, was an assistant once at Swan and Edgar's. And Lincolnshire born.

JOANNA RICHARDSON

Fancy, it's a Fridge!

MESSIEURS PICASSO and Cocteau, I read the other day, have decided that white-and-chromium refrigerators look far too mundane in the world of *haute cuisine*. They have set to work with liberal pots of paint and transformed their own into vigorous works of art.

What a field this opens in industrial design! Think of the fearsome Medusas (albeit only painted) that could be contrived to deter raids on the larder! Think of the succulent still-life (All One's Own Work) upon the door, hinting at the delicacies within! Think of the *pointilliste*, the *tachiste* fridge, dominating the dining-rooms of Chelsea! Think of the Breughel banquets, the Veronese marriage feasts that (suitably toned down) would be the rage of Kensington! What Tudor, Laughton, Lucullan fridges we should find in Soho!

The trouble is that, after a bit, one wouldn't know where simple fiction ended, where fact began; one couldn't distinguish Art for Art's sake from food. And it would be a pity to go and get the hock and only find a post-Impressionist bottle.

CAROLE PAINÉ

Tears, Idle Tears

WEEPING at the cinema can be got away with, if they don't turn the lights on before you've completed mopping-up operations. And, by the amount of local nose-blowing, you can deduce that you aren't the only one who wallowed in the unhappy ending. Your disgraceful sentimentality is shared.

At home too, a tear-jerker on the telly will probably jerk other tears than yours; or, even if the rest of the family is tougher than you, your weakness will be treated indulgently with "Mum's howling again," or kindly offers of disgusting hankies.

A touch of emotion is permissible at funerals even of those not closely linked by blood or friendship, though unfortunately the profession of hired mourner is no longer open to those with the gift of ready tears.

A sniff or two is also allowed towards the end of spectacles like *Lilac Time* or *Madame Butterfly*; and the nose

may be blown and glasses polished at certain items on the programme of a popular concert, especially if your own young are performing.

But, at Proms or symphony concerts, stiff upper lips must be worn and No Snivelling is the order of the day. The Trumpet Voluntary may be stuffed full with memories and associations for you, but your look of glazed attention must not slip to reveal the depths beneath.

And it is an offence against basic social decency togulp audibly at moments of beauty or pageantry in public places. Relieve your feelings by wagging a handkerchief, piping "hurray" or, if you must, jumping up and down; but don't make a spectacle of yourself by snivelling when the sunset and the pipers vanish together from the ramparts of Edinburgh Castle or a royal car flashes smiling by.

Above all, fellow-wailers, keep clear of railway stations and departing ships. A few minutes of watching the despondent groups and couples shifting from one foot to the other and picking up dropped gloves and glances will set your eyes gushing like hydrants.

There's no use at all trying to dry up us weepers and make us presentable by hissed injunctions to restrain and control ourselves. If our tear-ducts could be brought under voluntary control no one would be happier than

we. Especially when we look ahead to five probable weddings in the family, all likely to get off to a very wet start unless the bride's mother can train herself to keep the ritual tears down to a decent minimum. Advice from reformed sobbers would be much appreciated.

MARY VAUGHAN



Abroad Thoughts from Shrimpssea

LET them have the Côte d'Azur, Let them get their precious tan; (*Tommy, are you certain you're Warm in just a cardigan?*)

Let them sit beneath the vine, Guzzling some risotto mess; (*Fixed the windbreak? Jolly fine, Now then, ham or egg-and-cress?*)

Let the wild fiesta-tune Fan their silly hearts aflame; (*Bound to clear this afternoon; Shall we play a paper game?*)

Yes, those types who Seek the Sun We as Mums despise a bit; They are only having fun, We are darned well making it.

ANGELA MILNE



"I knew I'd forgotten to turn off the gas."

Toby Competitions

No. 27—The Bard Abroad

COMPETITORS are invited to select at least four lines of blank verse from Shakespeare's plays (but no more than six) and to arrange them so that they might be taken to form a comment on the English on holiday abroad. No more than two lines may be taken from any one play, and no two consecutive lines. "Chapter and verse," please.

A prize consisting of a framed *Punch* original, to be selected from all available drawings, is offered for the best entry. Runners-up will receive Toby bookmarks. Entries (any number, but each on a separate piece of paper and accompanied by a separate entry token, cut out from the bottom left-hand corner of this page) by first post on Friday, August 8, to TOBY COMPETITION No. 27, *Punch*, 10 Bouvierie Street, London, E.C.4.

Report on Competition No. 24

(In a Nutshell)

Nutshells were not very temptingly filled, for this task proved to be difficult. Wilde's fox-hunting epigram, which was offered as an example, was never in any danger of being surpassed: that was perhaps too much to hope for. Competitors were asked to submit pithy

definitions of any two of the following: Wimbledon Tennis; Chess; the Boat Race; Goodwood; Amateur Dramatics; Professional Golf; Trout-Fishing; Bridge. Some splendid venom was released, most of it being directed at Amateur Dramatics; but there was a sad scarcity of wit. Many entries contained one definition of merit, coupled with another of a lame or dubious quality. Other competitors stopped short at one definition. In the final analysis there remained only five entries which were felt worthy of consideration for the prize. This was awarded to

F. H. E. TOWNSHEND-ROSE
111 THORNBURY ROAD
OSTERLEY, MIDDLESEX

for the following entry:

CHESS. A game like power politics in which wooden-headed men are pushed around by forces beyond their control.

BRIDGE. A card game, so called because it enables the skilful player to make both ends meet.

The runners-up included the following:

AMATEUR DRAMATICS. The inaudible enacting the incredible.

TROUT-FISHING. Satisfying a primitive

instinct at a prohibitive price.—F. Basnett
16 Ellerdale Road, London, N.W.3

CHESS is a game where fools try to mate each other;

TROUT-FISHING is a game where mates try to fool each other.—John R. Gill,
9 Grove Road, Wrexham, N. Wales

AMATEUR DRAMATICS. The performance of the inapt by the inept.

PROFESSIONAL GOLF. A round-up of bogey-men.—Dr. R. M. MacPhail,
Saxilby, Lincoln

A selection from the more entertaining single items is given below.

Amateur Dramatics

Aunt Edna's date with the Mayor.—Roger Till, 14 Western Hill, Durham

Indulging the ego before the indulgent.—J. M. Duncan, Kilcruik, Kinghorn, Fife

An activity whose success depends not on the gifts of the performers but on those of the spectators.—Granville Garley, 15 Doric Avenue, South Frodsham, Cheshire

An excuse for taxing entertainment.—G. N. Wake, No. 2 Flat, 36 The Chase, London, S.W.4

The inflexible imitating the inimitable.—Trevener Peters, 69 Renters Avenue, London, N.W.4

Trout-Fishing

The edible getting away from the incredible.—Andrew Leggatt, 40 Portland Place, London, W.1

A trout line is the distance between two very queer fish.—Michael Birt, Stone House, Staunton-on-Wye, Herefordshire

The Boat Race

A trial by water with a judgment by a brewery.—R. O. Hubbard, "Merrywinds," 40 Windmill Rd., Nuneaton, Warwickshire

Professional Golf

Payment by results with Capital rewards for diminishing returns.—S. Brown, Monk House, Fullerton Road, Carshalton Beeches, Surrey

Going round with holes in your pocket.—W. R. Hughes, 35 Doulting, Shepton Mallett, Somerset

Chess

Intellectual hopscotch.—Mrs. V. E. Duncan, Kilcruik, Kinghorn, Fife

Bridge

Four minds of sawdust, one admitting it.—R. Boyd, 196 Camber Drive, Pevensey Bay

A round game for squares.—Joy Wates, Coombe Langley, Kingston Hill, Surrey

Toby bookmarks to all those quoted.



'ARRY IN ST. PETERSBURGH

HE TRIES TO MAKE A DROSKI-DRIVER UNDERSTAND THAT HE COULD HAVE GONE THE SAME DISTANCE IN A HANSOM FOR LESS MONEY.

November 8, 1890

"What made you laugh on your holiday? The landlady? Something one of the kids said . . .?" —Daily Sketch

The weather . . .?

Essence of

Parliament

THE world moves towards catastrophe, and to avert it the Admiralty has decided, so announces Lord Selkirk, its First Lord, that in future "signallers" will be known as "tactical communication operators." Lord Conesford, typically enough, was on to this like a knife and Lord Attlee, if not quite like a knife, was at any rate on to it. Lords may have their laugh, but the man I would love to meet is the man who thinks up follies of this order.

The Commons were concerned meanwhile with less momentous matters—with the Middle East. Emphatically it is, as we have already said, not "Suez all over again." Whatever the rest of the western world may think, at Westminster at any rate there is little bitterness. With his easy compliments to the Opposition, with his hob-nobs with Mr. Gaitskell, with his pats on the back to his colleagues, with his confessions that there is much to be said on both sides, with his protestation that he would much rather go home to his wife than sit at midnight Cabinets talking about foreigners, Mr. Macmillan plays the hand as differently from his predecessor as could be imagined. Mr. Selwyn Lloyd is cheered by the Socialists for announcing his conversion to U.N. Mr. Bevan is "delighted." There is none of the practical incoherence of Suez days. It is announced that our troops are going into Jordan and, whether the decision be right or wrong, at least there are the aeroplanes to take them in. In Suez days there would have been a delay of a week after the announcement before any aeroplanes were found.

And yet even if there is no immediate incoherence, is there not an ultimate incoherence? It may, as the Prime Minister complains, be "ungenerous"

of Mr. Emrys Hughes to suggest publicly that a home should be prepared for King Hussein in England, but would it not be just as well to give a thought to that problem at least in private? Is not Mr. Grimond perhaps right in suggesting that the Government is playing its Middle Eastern tune "by ear"?

If last week's problem was how to get into Jordan, robustly suggested Mr. Bevan, then next week's problem will be how to get out again, and no one on either Front Bench seriously suggested that that was not the truth. The summit conference may help to that end—or it may not. But if it does help it can only help by wrapping up our retreat from Jordan in some new parcel of principles, where nobody will notice it very much. Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, speaking first, had an opportunity to suggest what these principles might be, but Mr. Selwyn Lloyd is not much of a hand at suggesting principles. He let slip the opportunity and Mr. Bevan, coming next, took it. He laid down the four principles of a new Middle Eastern policy, and no one can doubt that if any agreement is reached it will be reached on some-

thing like Mr. Bevan's principles. He has stolen the show. Some Conservatives did not mind this, and, beginning with Mr. Laird, they were willing enough with their congratulations. Others on the back benches—Mr. Goodhart, Mr. Paul Williams, Mr. Bennett—were less happy, and Commander Noble, winding up for the Government, was not very inspiring. Were we going to let down the Sultan of Kuwait? Or—a greater inconvenience still—was the ungrateful Sultan not going to insist on being let down?

We have indeed treaty obligations to send British troops to the Sultan's rescue, but the Sultan, like the Duke of Wellington before him, seems to say of British troops; "I don't know what effect they have on the enemy, but by God, they frighten me." Damsels who prefer the dragon to St. George are very inconvenient.

The so-called realistic line that "we may not like Arab nationalism but we must do business with it" seemed on the whole the winning ticket. Yet there was one inconvenient little whisper that could never quite be downed. Sheikhs may go and British troops may go and Arab unity be achieved, but no one can

seriously believe that if the Arabs were united they would not as the first step attack Israel—and whatever the result of that, it certainly would not be peace.

The House had other debates. There was a useful debate on Monday about Commonwealth trade and, if one might single out one especially sensible speech from that debate, the prize would go to Mr. Hervey Rhodes, the Socialist Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. If an award were to be given for the most sensible Member of the House of Commons Mr. Rhodes would be one of the strongest candidates for it. Whenever he speaks the House is an interesting place—but then, alas! he does not speak very often. Apart from that there was Mr. Lennox-Boyd's announcement on Cyprus—a grim business that was as grimly accepted by Mr. Callaghan on the Opposition Front bench. The only cheer that Mr. Lennox-Boyd got was when he answered quite a different question from that which Mr. Kenneth Robinson had asked him. The rest was silence, and the House, after a statement from Mr. Hare on Forestry, turned to the consideration of Education (Scotland).

PERCY SOMERSET



Commander Noble



Mr. H. Rhodes



Concluding

A. J. WENTWORTH, B.A. (Retd.)

The Play

By H. F. ELLIS

I HARDLY know how the play happened to escape my memory, except of course that I was late at the Vicarage on account of the imbroglio in the greenhouse and one thing and another. Goodness knows it has been in my mind often enough the last few weeks, with rehearsals three days a week, and now one of my two armchairs borrowed for scenery. I am to be Alfred Lockhart, who comes in first and says "Oh—I say, is this right?", not the Professor. Lockhart is described in the directions—the play we are doing is, of course, *The Linden Tree*, by a man called Priestley, about whom I know little though I remember once reading what seemed to me a very much too highly-coloured account of life in a preparatory school by a man of the same name—at any rate Lockhart is described as "a precise, anxious, clerkly, middle-aged man," which made me chuckle when I read it. "Hardly the part for me, Miss Stephens," I pointed out; but she said she was sure I could do it very nicely. I suppose that is the point of acting, in a way. To be somebody different, I mean. If we all went on the stage to play ourselves it would be just like everyday life, which nobody wants

to pay half a crown to see, I take it, or even a shilling further back.

I dare say Sidney Megrim has had a lot of experience in producing, as we call it, but his manner is sometimes a little, well, abrupt, considering the difference in our ages. It is not after all as if one were being *paid* to make oneself out to be "precise and anxious" and all the rest of it—as is the case, for instance, when a younger Headmaster (*mutatis mutandis*, naturally) takes advantage of his position to administer a rebuff. At the very first reading of the play I had no sooner said this opening line about "Oh, I say, is this all right?" (We were not in costume then of course—strictly speaking: though as a matter of fact I wear my ordinary suit when we are—but even so I held up both hands as I spoke, to show surprise and doubt)—I had no sooner spoken than Megrim interrupted with a quite gratuitous "No, it is *not* all right, Wentworth. It's terrible."

"Indeed?" I said. "And in what precise manner—"

"Look," he said. "You have just been shown into the room by Mrs. Cotton here—"

"By Miss Stephens," I corrected.

"By Miss Stephens, if you prefer it, who is taking the part of Mrs. Cotton, woman-of-all-work to the Linden household. Right? You have come to see Mrs. Linden. You expected therefore to be shown into the drawing-room. You find yourself in Professor Linden's study. Right? What's the good of gabbling off your opening line and *then* looking surprised? Come in. Look round the room. Register surprise—"Oh!"—and off you go."

"You mean exit?" I asked. "At once?"

"Off you go with your speech, man. Now try it again, there's a good chap."

I said nothing, but at once, as a good trouper should, did my best to follow his instructions by looking round the room—St. Mark's Hall, of course, actually—with growing astonishment.

"Get on with it, man!" Megrim said. "You haven't come to take an inventory of the furniture."

It is almost impossible to get the feel of a part if one is to be constantly interrupted.

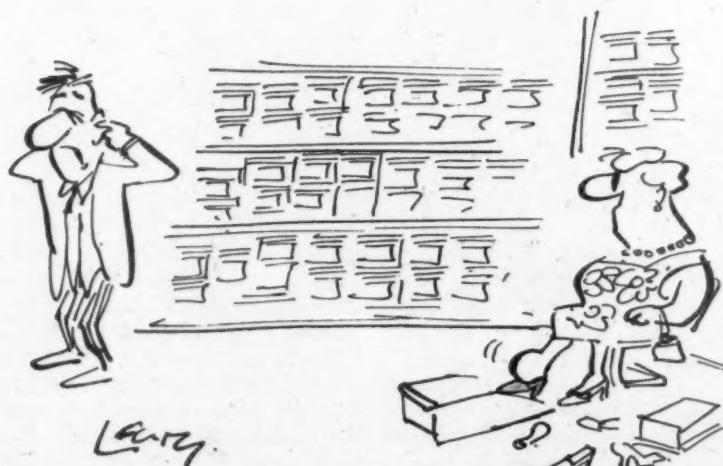
"I have been shown into a good many wrong rooms in my time, young man," I began—

"I dare say," he said. "But not into this one. Again, please."

I kept my temper, of course. As Miss Stephens said later, it is all part of the game. "You did it splendidly, Mr. Wentworth," she told me. "Sidney only makes us go through it over and over again because it helps to fix the lines in one's memory."

"I see," I said. "Yes. I hadn't thought of that."

When the telephone call came through to the Vicarage to say that the play was due to begin in a few minutes it was a considerable shock to me. I am a firm believer in punctuality, and of course it is most important that all the actors should be present on the opening night of a new play. New to Fenport, that is;



the play has already, I understand, been performed elsewhere. But by a stroke of luck a Mrs. Downing offered me a lift in her motor to the Parish Hall, and I climbed in, still in the Santa Claus outfit in which I had been helping to entertain the children. There would be time enough to change when I got to the Hall. At least, not time enough exactly, but one knows what one means. The important thing was to get there without delay, and I am afraid I cried out a little impatiently when one of Mrs. Downing's youngsters went back into the house for a missing balloon. "It was a *red* one," the boy kept saying, as if that mattered. Children have very little sense of proportion at times.

Megrin was standing at the back, or I suppose I should say "stage" door, and addressed me at once, characteristically without bothering to say good evening.

"My God!" he said. "Where have you *been*? We've had to ring up."

"I know that," I replied, overlooking the blasphemy. "I was at the Vicarage when the call came. I am sorry, but—"

"The curtain, man, the curtain!" he cried. "Muriel Stephens is on now, dusting round and gagging. They got impatient. Get on as quick as you can and never mind the make-up."

"At once!" I cried, and ran past him through the dressing-room.

I cannot think how I came to forget that I was still wearing the absurd red gown and rather soot-stained beard in which I had passed the earlier part of the evening. Looking back on it, I suppose the rush, and my anxiety not to keep Miss Stephens and the audience waiting, momentarily disturbed my judgment. One must remember, too, that I was already "in costume" and so not unnaturally felt ready to "go on." Even a more experienced actor, I dare say, might become confused if he had to rush at a moment's notice from one engagement to another. I do not acquit myself entirely of blame, but as a fair-minded man I consider it was a part of Megrin's duty, as producer, to say a word of warning about my clothing. Be that as it may, I lost no time in making my entry and, after adjusting my eyes to the glare of the footlights and taking a quick look round the stage, as instructed at rehearsal, repeated my opening line.

"Oh, I say," I said. "Is this right?"

Of course, strictly, I should have been shown in by Miss Stephens, or "Mrs. Cotton" to give her her stage name, but as she was already there, dusting and so on, that could not be helped. In any case, as it turned out, it did not matter. Miss Stephens turned round, duster in hand, and instead of replying with *her* opening speech (which runs, as a matter of fact, "Right? It's as right as we can make it. Nothing's right now, nor ever will be, if you ask me," and so can hardly be described as difficult to memorize), simply stood and gaped. No doubt she was surprised by my appearance, but as an actress of considerable experience—however, there it was. The audience had broken into loud laughter immediately on my opening line, so it may be that, even if she had taken her cue, she would not have been heard.

The situation was a difficult one for both of us. The laughter grew in volume and I felt completely bewildered. I am no stranger to merriment, for a schoolmaster's life is by no means the dull and colourless affair that some people make it out to be, nor am I without the means of quelling it when it threatens to grow beyond bounds. But on this occasion I felt quite at a loss—until happening to put my hand up to my chin, as is my habit when puzzled or upset, I encountered my beard and at once became aware how incongruous my costume must appear in a modern play, even at Christmas time. It was difficult to know what to do for the best. Somebody off-stage was shouting "Come off the stage, you fool!" which did not help. But what particularly distressed me was to catch sight of Mrs. Wheeler, a lady whom I respect and admire, sitting in the front row and looking over her handkerchief at me with eyes that, unless I am much mistaken, were filled with tears. To her, at least, I felt that some explanation was due.

"I was unfortunately delayed, Mrs. Wheeler," I began, stepping forward to the footlights. "There was a slight imbroglio in the Vicarage greenhouse—"



I got no further, partly because I saw that Mrs. Wheeler was doubled up as though in pain, and partly because at this point somebody, Megrin I suppose, pulled the curtains across and I had much ado to avoid becoming seriously entangled in the folds. So that was that.

We rang up again, as the saying goes, about ten minutes later, after Megrin had made a short speech to fill in the time while I was busy changing and making up. It all went off very well, I think. It was a little awkward, naturally, to have to repeat my opening line, with which the audience were by now familiar, but I carried it off by varying the intonation.

"Oh, I say!" I said. "Is this right?"

"Well, it's better," some fool at the back called out (I suspect Willis), and there was renewed laughter; but neither Miss Stephens nor I took any notice, and after waiting for the noise to subside, went quietly on with the play. I must say, everybody seemed to enjoy it. I make no claim to be an actor, but I confess there were tears in my own eyes during my final scene with Professor Linden (actually Major Thorpe, from *West Acre*), when we discuss the need for colour and vision in education. How true that is! Major Thorpe I thought excellent. So indeed were all the others, and it was a real surprise to me at the end to hear my own name called out first of all. The proper thing, of course, as the author was not present, would have been to call upon the major,

or possibly the producer, to take a bow. I took no notice therefore, affecting not to hear; but the shout was taken up in all parts of the hall, and the clamour eventually reached such proportions that I was reluctantly forced to step forward and raise a hand to stop it.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I said, when I was able to make myself heard, "I am at a loss to know why I am singled out in this way. This is my first appearance on any stage—or rather," I added with a smile, "in a sense my second, as a gentleman at the back has just reminded me. I hope it will not be my last."

"So do we," cried Miss Stephens: a remark which was greeted with such prolonged and good-humoured applause that I found it by no means easy, hardened as I am to such scenes by innumerable Prize-givings and so on, to restrain my emotion.

"It has been a great privilege," I continued, "to learn some of the elements of this great art in the company of so gifted and distinguished a—er—cast. To Miss Stephens, who first enlisted my aid in this enterprise; to our indefatigable producer, Mr. Sidney Megrim; to Major Thorpe, for whose performance to-night I feel sure the knowledgeable and incisive dramatic critic of the *Advertiser* will find the right word, if right word there be; to Miss Edge, but for whose painstaking make-up—"

I had intended to conclude the list of those who had helped in one way or another with the production by adding "to all these I owe a debt that I can never hope to repay," or some such suitable, and indeed sincere, phrase. But the applause and clapping that followed each name as I mentioned it was so enthusiastic that I fear I lost the thread of my own remarks. Indeed, during the particularly prolonged (and I am sure well-deserved) burst of cheering occasioned by my reference to Miss Edge, our make-up artist, my mind unaccountably wandered to the earlier part of the evening and I was unable to restrain an involuntary exclamation of dismay.

"God bless my soul!" I cried. "I left my bicycle at the Vicarage."

There was so much laughter at this—in which, after a momentary bewilderment, I readily joined—that I thought it best to leave the matter where it rested and give way to Megrim, who took the opportunity to say a few words of thanks on his own behalf.

So ended a memorable evening. Everybody has been more than kind, especially to one who took, after all, only a comparatively minor part. Even Odding, a man whom I have perhaps judged too hastily, came up to tell me that I had given him the best evening of his life. I am too old a hand to take such exaggerated praise at more than its face value. Still, there is no denying

that kindness, as one gets on in life, is very warming.

One has much to be thankful for. It has been a tiring day, not without moments of difficulty that might easily, but for a certain—"knack," shall I call it?—that only years and experience can bestow, have ended in disaster. But the ending has been a happy one. I feel that I am beginning to take a full part, a rewarding part, in the life of the village that is now my home. One does not want to become sentimental, but I think I may claim that I am "accepted" in Fenport, that I belong. And that, to an old man who has sometimes been lonely, means much.

My mind is at rest, what is more, about my bicycle. The vicar rang up to say that he had stumbled across it by his garden gate and had put it in the greenhouse for the night. So it is, in his own rather odd phrase "more or less under cover."

THE END

Next Week:

DIARY OF A FASHION
MODEL

By SUSAN CHITTY



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